June 3, 1991

THE NEW YORKER

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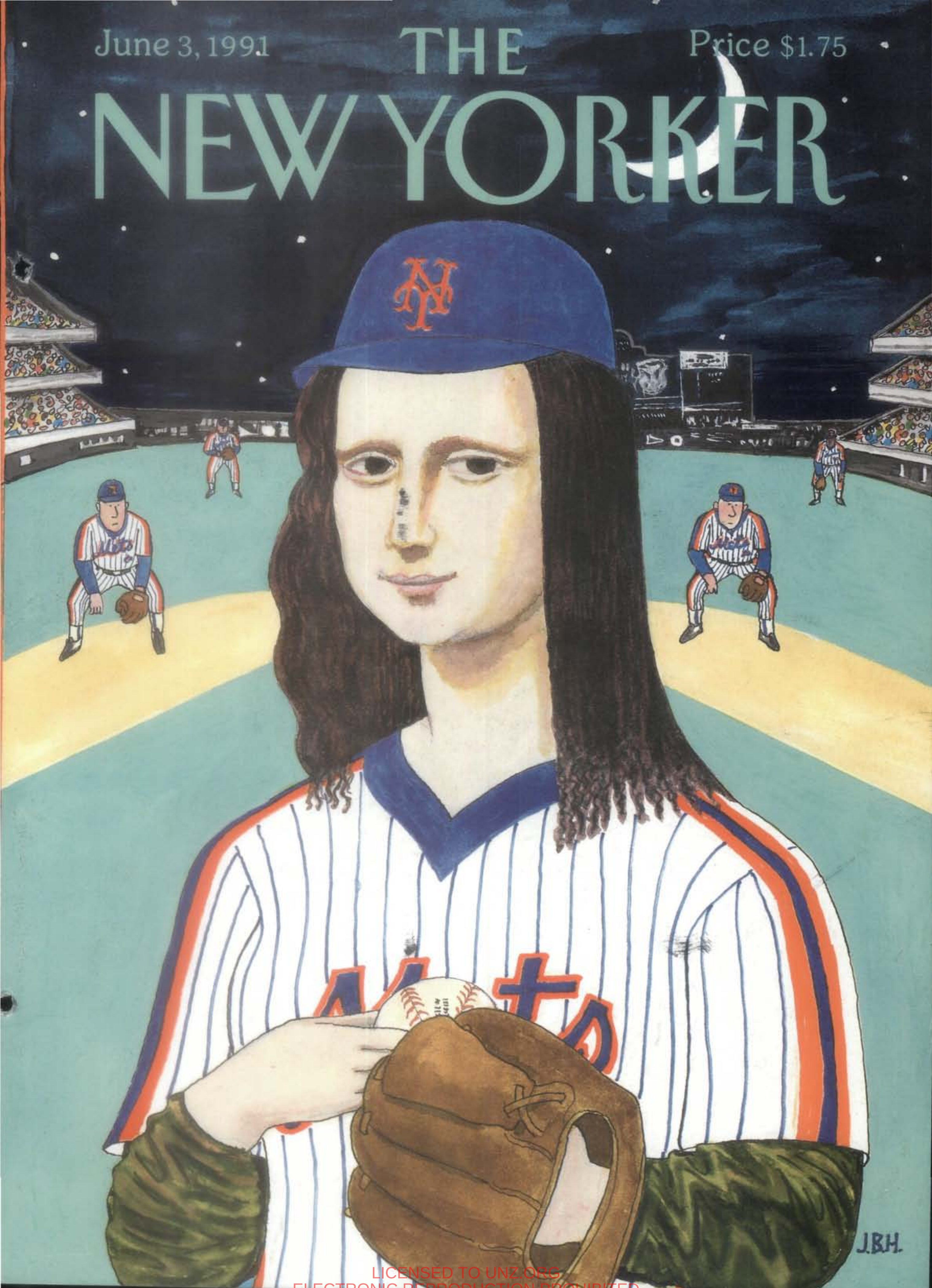

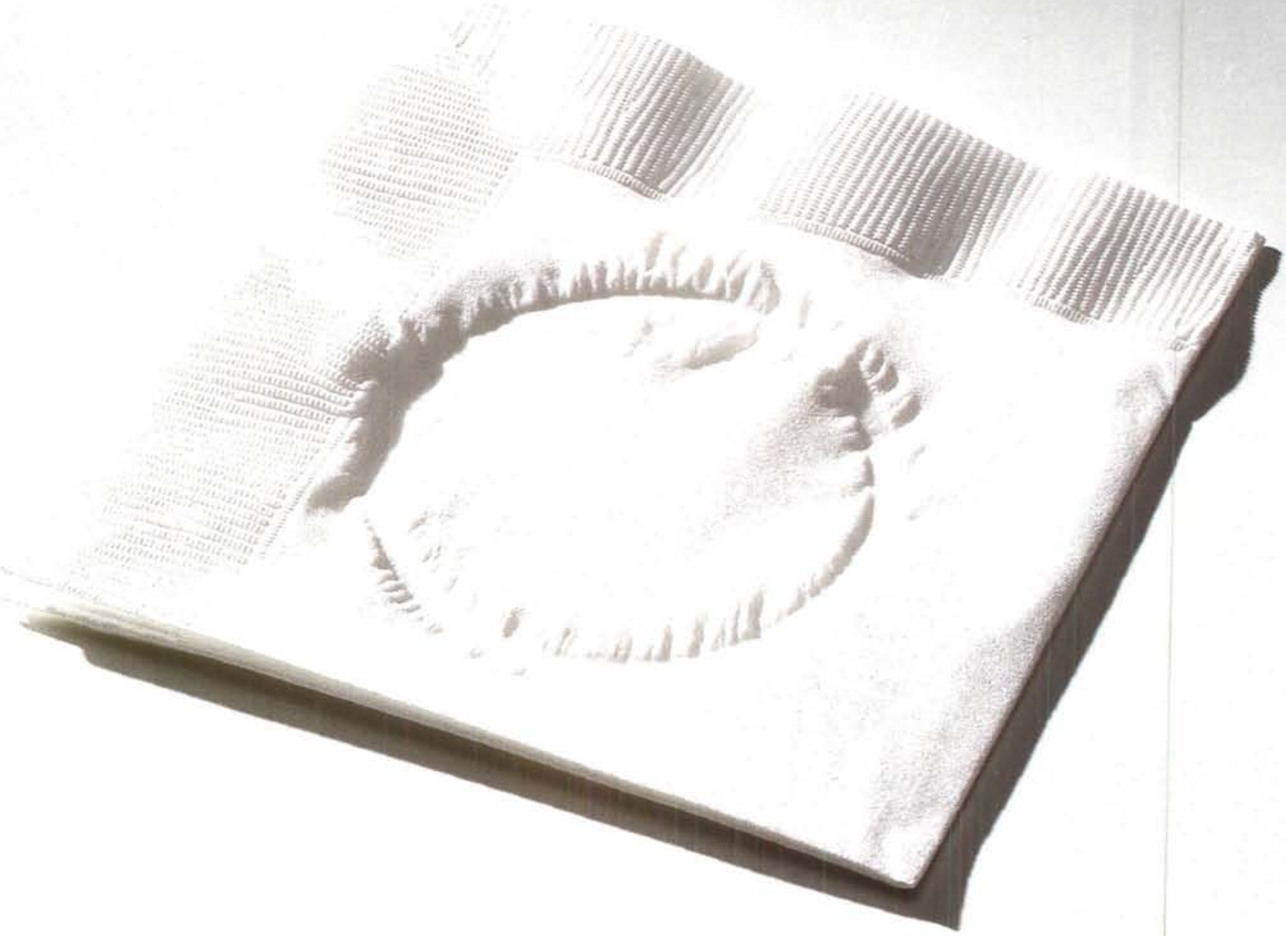

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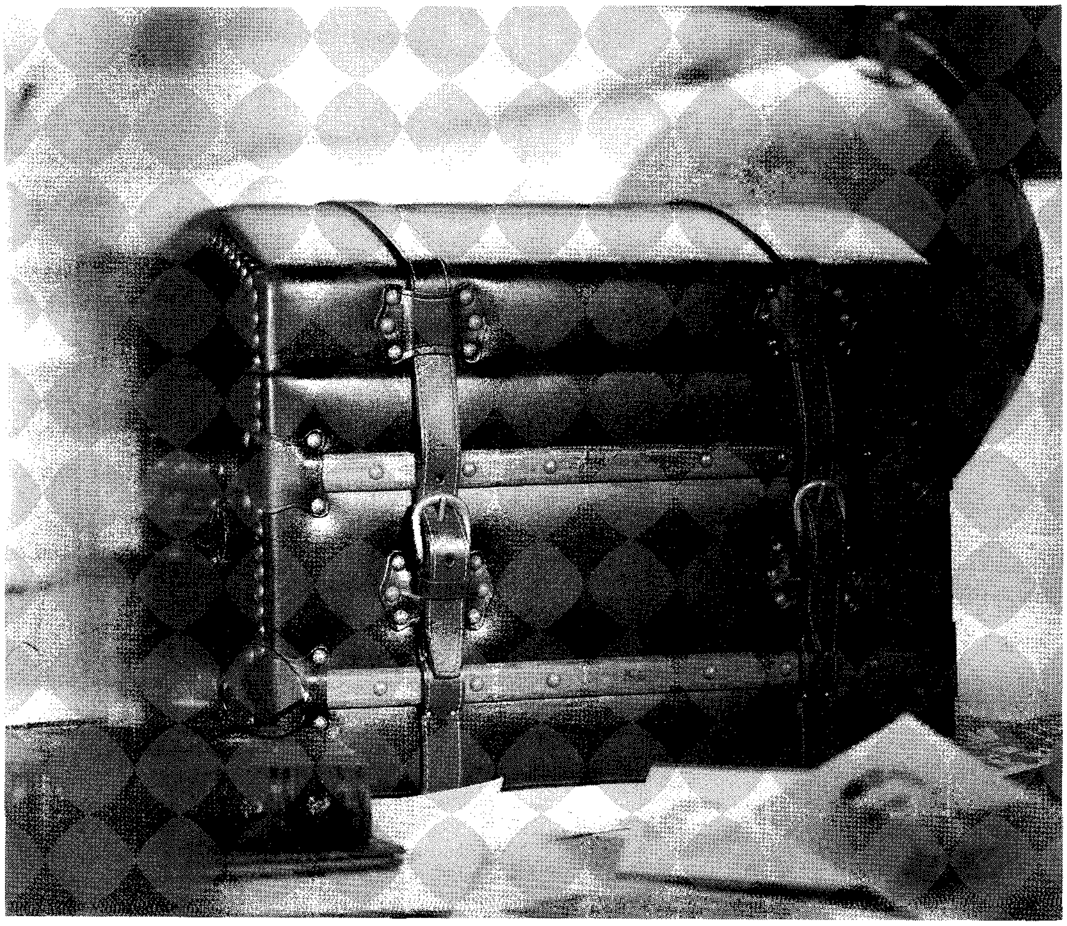

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THE NEW YORKER
20 WEST 43RD STREET, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10036
(212) 840-3800

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THE NEW YORKER (ISSN 0028-792X), published weekly by The New Yorker Magazine, Inc., 20 W. 43rd St., N.Y., N.Y. 10036; Steven T. Florio, president and chief executive officer; Ruth A. Diem, vice-president and human resources director; Frank Mustacato, vice-president and circulation director; Virginia L. Jespersen, vice-president and general manager/cfo; Lynn Guthrie Heiler, vice-president and associate publisher; Matthew D. Roberts, vice-president and marketing director; Pamela H. Older, vice-president and director of manufacturing; Martha Kaplan, vice-president. Branch advertising offices: 111 East Wacker Drive, Chicago, Ill. 60601; 41 Osgood Place, San Francisco, Calif. 94133; Suite 1460, 5900 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles, Calif. 90036; 67½ Chestnut St., Boston, Mass. 02108; 19 South Audley St., London, W1Y 5DN. Metropolitan Publishers Representatives: 3017 Piedmont Road, NE, Atlanta, Ga. 30305; 2500 So. Dixie Highway, Miami, Fla. 33133; 3016 Mason Place, Tampa, Fla. 33629; 3 Church St., Suite 503, Toronto, Canada. M5E 1M2. Carol Orr & Co., Publishers Representative: 3300 Oak Lawn, Suite 500, Dallas, Tx. 75219. Vol. LXVII, No. 15, June 3, 1991. Second-class postage paid at New York, N.Y., and at additional mailing offices. Authorized as second-class mail by the Post Office Department, Ottawa, Canada, and for payment of postage in cash. Canadian goods and services tax registration number R123242885. © 1991 by The New Yorker Magazine, Inc., in the United States and Canada. All rights reserved. No part of this periodical may be reproduced without the consent of The New Yorker. The magazine's name, logo, and various titles and headings herein have been registered with the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. Printed in U.S.A. Subscription rates: In U.S. and possessions, one year, $32.00; two years, $52.00. In Canada, one year, $66.00. Other foreign, one year, $66.00, payable in advance.
POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The New Yorker, Box 56447, Boulder, Colorado 80322.

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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

THE THEATRE

FOR obvious reasons, writers like to set historical dramas in places on the brink of social unrest, and, also understandably, they frequently use night clubs as the locales for such stories. Unravelling your tale in a *boîte* or a dive or a dance hall is an economical, atmospheric way to catch all the players involved in an epochal moment; and singing and dancing can keep even a low-budget production moving along. For example, "Born to Rumba!," a musical set in 1958 Havana that just closed at the Duo Theatre, had little to recommend it except a small collection of chorines, but somehow they were enough. The set was a night spot called the Rivoli, where Cuba Libres were served and where everyone, it seemed, was either in and out of his cups or in and out of bed.

In "Song of Singapore," the million-dollar musical now at 17 Irving Place, the hot spot is named Freddy's and the cocktails are Taiwanons. There's dancing, too, not only by performers but (before the show) by patrons, to a swing band called the Malayan Melody Makers. It's 1941, the same year our favorite film based at the Asian port was shot (a remake of "Dangerous" called "Singapore Woman," starring Brenda Marshall); the Japanese didn't take the town until the next year, so a spirit of abandon is definitely in the air.

Another entry in the night-club-setting sweepstakes comes from playwright Frank Pugliese, courtesy of Naked Angels, a theatre group that sprang up in August, 1986, and that performs at a seventy-four-seat venue in Chelsea. "The Summer Winds," as Mr. Pugliese's play is called, takes place in the here and now, at a Brooklyn joint called Wrong Number. Present-day Brooklyn doesn't really fit into our calm-before-the-storm theme, unless you're one of those wags who think that the borough is perpetually on the verge.

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

(Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for schedule and ticket information.)

Casanova—A new play by Constance Congdon, directed by Michael Greif. Opens May 28 at 8. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 598-7150.)

Food and Shelter—Kelly Coffield heads the cast of a new play by Jane Anderson. Directed by André Ernotte. Previews May 28-29. Opens May 30 at 8. (Vineyard Theatre, 108 E. 15th St. 353-3874.)

The Goat—A comedy by Ben Morse, set in Brooklyn. Preview on May 28. Opens May 29 at 8. (Perry Street Theatre, 31 Perry St. 255-7190.)

Lips Together, Teeth Apart—Christine Baranski, Anthony Heald, Swoosie Kurtz, and Nathan Lane in a new play by Terrence McNally. John Tillinger directed. In previews. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-7907.)

Mr. Gogol and Mr. Preen—A new comedy by Elaine May, with Zohra Lampert, William H. Macy, and Mike Nussbaum. Directed by Gregory Mosher. In previews. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

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The Subject Was Roses—John Mahoney, Dana Ivey, and Patrick Dempsey in a revival of the 1964 play by Frank D. Gilroy. Previews through June 4. Opens June 5 at 8. (Roundabout, 100 E. 17th St. 420-1883.)

The Summer Winds—A new play by Frank Pugliese, with Ashley Crow, Lisa Eichhorn, Timothy Britten Parker, and others. Opens May 29 at 8, and runs through June 15. (Naked Angels, 114 W. 17th St. 727-0020.)

Troubadour—A musical about St. Francis of Assisi by Bert Draesel and John Martin. Previews through June 2. Opens June 4 at 8. (Ubu Theatre, 15 W. 28th St. 673-3748.)

NEW THIS SEASON

And the World Goes 'Round: The Songs of Kander & Ebb—A musical revue, with Bob Cuccioli, Karen Mason, Brenda Pressley, Jim Walton, and Karen Ziëmba. (Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 246-0102.)

Breaking Legs—Philip Bosco and Vincent Gardenia have the leads in a new comedy by Tom Dulack. John Tillinger directed. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 580-1313.)

Charge It, Please—A comedy, with music, by Carlos Gorbea. Three performances a week are in English; four a week are in Spanish. (Puerto Rican Traveling Theatre, 304 W. 47th St. 354-1293.)

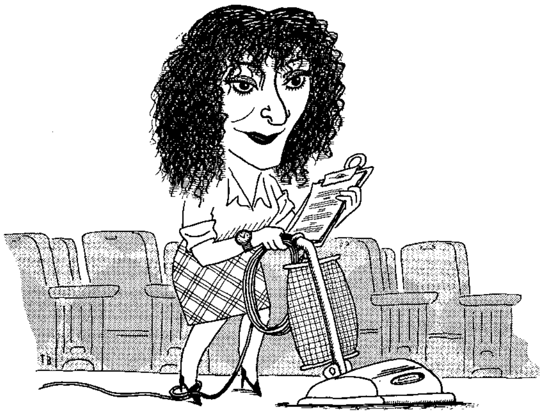
Circle Repertory Company—Presenting **WALKING THE DEAD**, a new play by Keith Curran. Scotty Bloch, Ashley Gardner, Joe Mantello, Christopher Shaw, Cotter Smith, Myra Taylor, and Tyrone Wilson make up the cast. Directed by Mark Ramont. (99 Seventh Ave. S. 924-7100. Closes June 2.)

Daugherty & Field Off-Broadway—The cabaret team of Bill Daugherty and Robin Field holds forth in a revue of swing and show tunes. (Double Image, 15 Vandam St. 924-1120. Closes June 8.)

Ensemble Studio Theatre—Presenting the 1991 festival of one-act plays. Series B, through June 9: "Practice," by Leslie Ayvazian; "Face Divided," by Edward Allan Baker; "Rapid Eye Movement," by Susan Kim; "Over Texas," a short opera by Michael John La Chiusa; and "Can Can," by Romulus Linney. (549 W. 52nd St. 247-3405. The festival continues through June 23.)

Fiddler on the Roof—The Israeli actor Topol makes a commanding Tevye—the best of all of them—in this production, which falls somewhere between revival and facsimile. The songs are by Bock and Harnick; the dances and staging are re-created from the Jerome Robbins originals; and the costumes are from the Patricia Zipprodt originals. (Reviewed in our issue of 12/3/90.) (Gershwin, 51st St. west of Broadway. 586-6510.)

Fridays—A 1981 play by Andrew Johns, with Henderson Forsythe and John Peakes. Presented by the Riverside Shakespeare Company and directed by Gus Kaikkonen. (Playhouse 91, at 316 E. 91st St. 831-2000.)



Elaine May, author of "Mr. Gogol and Mr. Preen"

The Good Times Are Killing Me—The cartoonist Lynda Barry devised this memory play of words and pop tunes about a racially mixed neighborhood. At the heart of it is the friendship of two little girls, one white, the other black, who are delightfully portrayed by Angela Goethals and Chandra Wilson. The undercurrent of serious comment on race doesn't add much, but every humorous scene scores a bull's-eye. Also with Kim Staunton, Wendell Pierce, and Holly Felton. Mark Brokaw directed. (5/6/91) (Second Stage, Broadway at 76th St. 873-6103.)

Gypsy—The Tyne Daly-led revival of the great Laurents-Styne-Sondheim musical has returned to Broadway for a limited engagement. It is so delightful—and the cast so engaging—that we think anyone would be happier for having seen it. One suggestion: don't applaud when Mama Rose comes down the aisle (you'll drown out the first number). (12/4/89) (Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 307-4100.)

The Haunted Host—Harvey Fierstein and Jason Workman star in a revival of Robert Patrick's 1964 play. "Pouf Positive," a new comedy by Mr. Patrick (which closes June 2), caps the evening. (Actors Playhouse, 100 Seventh Ave. S. 691-6226.)

The Hunchback of Notre Dame—Everett Quinton's new show, which is billed as "a quasimusical." (Charles Ludlam Theatre, 1 Sheridan Square. 691-2271.)

I Hate Hamlet—In Paul Rudnick's jokey farce, Nicol Williamson gives a stunning comedy performance as the ghost of John Barrymore, summoned to aid a young Hollywood actor who has been booked to play Hamlet in the Park. Mr. Williamson is ably supported by some of the other actors, but the show boils down to a marvellous solo turn. (4/22/91) (Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 582-4022.)

Jackie Mason: Brand New—The comedian brings his one-man show to Broadway again. (Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 246-0102.)

Jean Cocteau Repertory—The final play of the season is **THE EMIGRANTS**, a 1968 work by Slawomir Mrozek. (Bouwerie Lane Theatre, 330 Bowery, at Bond St. 677-0060. Closes June 2.)

Letters to a Student Revolutionary—A play by Elizabeth Wong, presented by the Pan Asian Repertory Theatre. (St. Clement's, 423 W. 46th St. 245-2660. Closes June 1.)

Lost in Yonkers—There's not one glimmer of honesty or authenticity in this family melodrama by Neil Simon. Set in Yonkers during the Second World War, it's about what happens when a cowering, pathetic man has to leave his two adolescent sons with his intimidating mother for the better part of a year. (3/11/91) (Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 221-1211.)

Lusting After Pipino's Wife—A comedy by Sam Henry Kass, with Alexandra Gersten, Wayne Maugans, Debra Riessen, and Joseph Siravo. Casey Childs directed. (45th Street Theatre, 354 W. 45th St. 564-8038.)

Miss Saigon—Oh, the horror! The horror! (4/29/91) (Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200.)

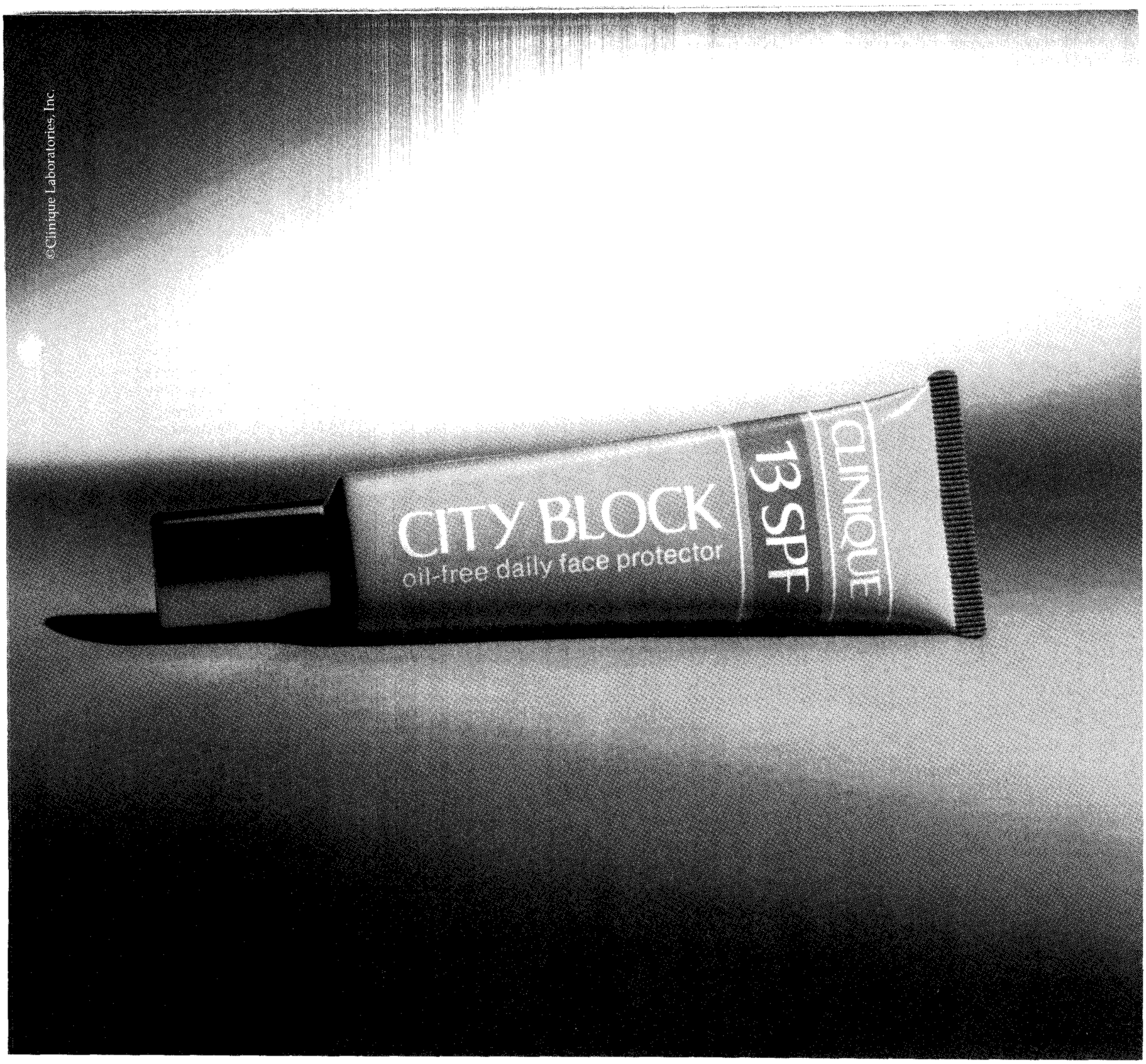
Night Sky—A play by Susan Yankowitz, presented by the Women's Project. Joseph Chaikin directed. (Judith Anderson, 422 W. 42nd St. 768-4334. Closes June 9.)

The Old Boy—A. R. Gurney's play about a distinguished alumnus who returns to a prestigious prep school in New England to deliver a commencement address is a disappointment, in spite many funny lines along the way. The acting, under the direction of John Rubinstein, is good throughout; that of Clark Gregg, as the hero's political secretary, is especially strong. (5/20/91) (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 279-4200. Closes June 9.)

Once on This Island—An enchanting musical by Lynn Ahrens (book and lyrics) and Stephen Flaherty (score), based on Rosa Guy's 1985 novel, "My Love, My Love." (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Only the Truth Is Funny—The comedian Rick Reynolds' one-man show. (Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 246-0102.)

Our Country's Good—A play by Timberlake Wertenbaker about a group of convicts in Botany Bay rehearsing a production of George Farquhar's "The



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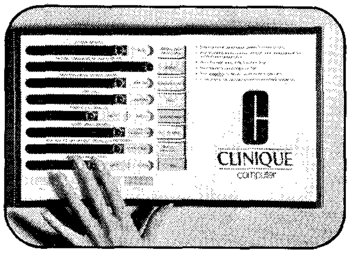

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Recruiting Officer" in 1789. Mark Lamos's production is marred by truly terrible acting, across the board, from a cast led by Peter Frechette. The play tries hard to identify itself as Serious Theatre, but never gets much beyond the initial irony inherent in the idea of society's outcasts performing a play written for and about high society. (5/20/91) (Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 307-4100.)

Pageant—A musical spoof of beauty contests. Book and lyrics by Bill Russell and Frank Kelly and music by Albert Evans. Conceived and directed by Robert Longbottom. (Blue Angel, 321 W. 44th St. 262-3333.)

Penn & Teller's Refrigerator Tour—The heavenly twain meet again. The new tricks are just as mysterious (and frightening) as the old ones. As for the tricksters, their bogus candor is intact, and they've never been funnier. (Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 246-0220.)

The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui—John Turturro and David Patrick Kelly star in a production of Brecht's play. (CSC, 136 E. 13th St. 677-4210. Closes June 9.)

A Room of One's Own—Eileen Atkins is sublime in this stage adaptation of the Virginia Woolf essay. Easily the most civilized entertainment on offer, this one-woman show is something every lively-minded young woman above the age of fifteen—fourteen if she's particularly lively-minded—will want to see. (3/18/91) (Lamb's, 130 W. 44th St. 997-1780. Closes June 9.)

Satan Never Sleeps—A play, with music, by Ronald Wyche and Weldon. (Billie Holiday, 1368 Fulton St., Brooklyn. 1-718 636-0918.)

The Secret Garden—This lovely musical adaptation of the classic children's story by Frances Hodgson Burnett isn't just a kiddie show. Subtle, charming, intelligent, and wholly literary in its approach to adaptation, it manages both to be faithful to the spirit of the book and to comment on the particular moment in time that produced it. (5/13/91) (St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 246-0102.)

Song of Singapore—A musical, by Erik Frandsen, Michael Garin, Robert Hipkens, Paula Lockheart, and Allan Katz, that is set in a Singapore night club in 1941. (17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. 228-0844.)

States of Shock—A new play by Sam Shepard, starring John Malkovich. Bill Hart was the director. (Reviewed in this issue.) (American Place Theatre, 111 W. 46th St. 840-3074. Closes June 2.)

The Substance of Fire—Ron Rifkin gives an impeccable performance as a publisher—a refugee from Nazi Germany—whose difficulties with his grown children are no greater than those with himself. The play, by Jon Robin Baitz, is not flawless, but it is consistently absorbing and very well acted, under the direction of Daniel Sullivan. With Sarah Jessica Parker, Patrick Breen, Jon Tenney, and Maria Tucci. (4/1/91) (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

The Sum of Us—David Stevens' poignant comedy about how hard it is for parents and children to break free of each other (particularly if they get on too well) is set in present-day Australia. Depending on how you look at it, the play is either very dear and rather flawed or rather dear and very flawed. (11/5/90) (Cherry Lane, 38 Commerce St. 989-2020.)

The Virgin Molly—A play by Quincy Long. Directed by Sarah Eckhardt; with Robert Bella, Neil Pepe, Jordan Lage, Todd Weeks, Christopher McCann, and Ray Anthony Thomas. (Atlantic, 336 W. 20th St. 645-8755. Closes June 8.)

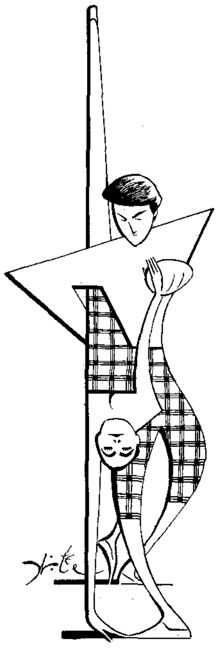
The Way of the World—A modern-dress version of Congreve's play, directed by David Greenspan. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 598-7150.)

The Will Rogers Follies—The sets by Tony Walton, the direction and choreography by Tommy Tune, the costumes by Willa Kim, and the row upon row of Ziegfeld girls make a feast for the eyes, but the funny bone and heart are neglected. Keith Carradine is an engaging, amusing Rogers, but that's not enough, despite Cy Coleman's pleasant score. (5/13/91) (Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 730-8200.)

Yokohama Duty—A new play by Quincy Long, with Nesbitt Blaisdell, Michael Cullen, Susanna Frazer, Bruce Katzman, Cheri Nakumura, Brett Rickaby, Preston Keith Smith, and Peter Yoshida. Julian Webber directed. (SoHo Rep, 46 Walker St. 869-3530. Closes June 9.)

LONG RUNS

CATS: Some twenty poems about cats by T. S. Eliot, set to music by Andrew Lloyd Webber. A mighty spectacle about mighty little, owing its effectiveness to Trevor Nunn's direction and to John Napier's sets and costumes. (Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200.) . . . **CITY OF ANGELS:** Larry Gelbart, dramatist; Cy Coleman, composer; Billy Byers, arranger; and Michael Blakemore, director, are all in top form in this sharp, jokey musical satire about Hollywood in the forties. (Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 246-0102.) . . . **THE FANTASTICKS:** The longest-running long run turned thirty-one last month. (Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838.) . . . **FORBIDDEN BROADWAY 1991:** A source of continual merriment, this revue is a cluster of parodies of shows along the Great White Way. Gerard Alessandrini conceived and directed it, and wrote the witty, barbed lyrics. (Theatre East, 211 E. 60th St. 838-9090.) . . . **FOREVER PLAID:** Stuart Ross's loving tongue-in-cheek salute to the "guy groups" of the fifties is a real treat. Bring your mom. Hell, bring the whole family. (Steve McGraw's, 158 W. 72nd St. 595-7400.) . . . **GRAND HOTEL:** The dazzling imagination of Tommy Tune's direction and choreography and the dazzling scenery by Tony Walton almost make up for the inner vacancy of this show, but not quite. The story and characters are skimpy and the music is undistinguished. Nevertheless, there isn't a boring moment. (Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 246-0102.) . . . **LES MISÉRABLES:** The stars of this musical adaptation of the Victor Hugo novel are John Napier's settings and David Hersey's lighting. (Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200.) . . . **NUNSENSE:** A musical comedy by Dan Goggin. (Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-4321.) . . . **OTHER PEOPLE'S MONEY:** Jerry Sterner's comedy about a New York corporate raider's attempt to take over a decorous New England business maintains its suspense from beginning to end. (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 420-8000.) . . . **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA:** This much ballyhooed Andrew Lloyd Webber musical is fun—if you're not bothered by theatre that cares not a whit for words and contains not one ghost of an idea. Except for the sets, everything about the show is negligible. (Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200.) . . . **SIX DEGREES OF SEPARATION:** You're best off knowing nothing about the John Guare play other than that it represents a perfect meeting of the playwright, director Jerry Zaks, and actress Stockard Channing. Out of a true story—one apparently about celebrity and Good Samaritanism—Guare has fashioned a wistful comedy about race, class, money, imagination, collective conscience, the individual psyche, and the impulse toward art. (Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.) . . . **SMOKE ON THE MOUNTAIN:** This loving satire of old-time gospel music, set in 1938, is perfectly delightful. Written by Connie Ray, it recreates a Saturday-night service at a small church in rural North Carolina, where a family of gospel singers have been invited to appear. (Lamb's, 130 W. 44th St. 997-1780.)



"Brief Fling," at A.B.T.

DANCE

WE have never met an average child of any age, but we hear they exist, usually through sentences that begin, "The average child would not like . . . " So, when we wanted to test the general-interest quotient of a new videotape on José Greco and his company from 1959—"José Greco in Performance," from VAI—we did our best and rounded up the *nearest* child handy, a five-year-old girl.

The half-hour tape is actually an episode of the old TV program "Voice of Firestone." The format seems rather fusty to us now—narration by Hugh James, a set that might have been purchased at Kresge's, a stage the size of our doctor's waiting room, the thousand and one variations on gray that black-and-white television used to provide—but it didn't seem to bother our control at all. In fact, the action captivated her from start to finish. We asked her what she liked best. "Look," she said, "it has a hero"—she was referring to the handsome, youthful figure of Mr. Greco himself—"and he has his own band and he loves his band."

Our control wants you to know as well that most of the dances are full of hopping. (She doesn't mind if we add that they are also full of shapely little choreographic phrases that emphasize the company's brilliant footwork.) There is an aristocratic little boy in the group who dances both folk and flamenco forms wonderfully; there is a regal dance for a man and a woman in hats; and there is a solo for Mr. Greco, swirling a cape, that takes place in a spotlight on an otherwise blacked-out stage. "Is he the bad guy, too?" our control wanted to know. "No," we said. "Then why did all the other people run away?" she asked. We wanted to tell her that Mr. Greco was dancing so clearly and precisely, with so much attention to *épaulement* and rhythmic drama, that it was just as well no one else was around, because you couldn't take your eyes off him. We wanted to tell her how expressive he was in his reserve, and how his movements bore the weight of tragedy without enacting anything tragic. We wanted to tell her why we cherish great dancing, even though, at that moment, the greatness was being filtered through a video of a TV show that we didn't appreciate the first time around.

"Because he's the star," we said.

As it happens, the "all-new" José Greco Company—starring Mr. Greco's son José II and featuring Mr. Greco in person—will perform at the Joyce through June 9.

New York City Ballet—May 28 at 8: "Waltz Trilogy," "Calcium Light Night," "Walpurgisnacht Ballet," and "Brahms/Handel." . . . ¶ May 29 at 8: "Souvenir de Florence," "Le Tombeau de Couperin," "Four Gnossiennes," and "Western Symphony." . . . ¶ May 30 at 8: Divertimento from "Le Baiser de la Fée," "Ecstatic Orange," and "Chaconne." . . . ¶ May 31 at 8: "Watermill" and "I'm Old Fashioned." . . . ¶ June 1 at 2: "Le Tombeau de Couperin," "Waltz Trilogy," and "Dances at a Gathering." . . . ¶ June 1 at 8: "Walpurgisnacht Ballet," "Concertino," "Ecstatic Orange," and "I'm Old Fashioned." . . . ¶ June 2 at 1: Divertimento from "Le Baiser de la Fée," "Calcium Light Night," "Allegro Brillante," and "I'm Old Fashioned." . . . ¶ June 2 at 7: "Souvenir de Florence," "Concertino," "Walpurgisnacht Ballet," and "Brahms/Handel." . . . ¶ June 4 at 8: "Apollo," "Concertino," "Le Tombeau de Couperin," and "I'm Old Fashioned." . . . ¶ June 5 at 8: "Watermill" and "Who Cares?" (New York State Theatre. 870-5570. The season continues through June 30.)

American Ballet Theatre—May 27 at 8: "Ballet Imperial," "Other Dances," and "Gaîté Parisienne." . . . ¶ May 28 at 8: "Birthday Offering," "Jardin aux Lilas," and "Sinfonietta." . . . ¶ May 29 at 8: "Push Comes to Shove," "Nine Sinatra Songs," and "In the Upper Room." . . . ¶ May 30-31 at 8, June 1 at 2 and 8, and June 3 at 8: Act III of "Raymonda," "Fall River Legend," and "Brief Fling." . . . ¶ June 4 at 8 and June 5 at 2 and 8: "Giselle." (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000. The season continues through June 22.)

José Greco Company—A troupe of fifteen dancers, singers, and musicians from Madrid—in classical and folk-based dances. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. May 28-31 at 8, June 1 at 2 and 8, June 2 at 2 and 7:30, and June 4-5 at 8. Through June 9.)

DanceAfrica Festival—Performances by Forces of Nature, LadyGourd Sangoma, and Chuck Davis's African-American Dance Ensemble. The program includes "The African-American Awareness Ritual," choreographed by Mr. Davis. (Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave. 1-718 636-4100. June 1 at 3 and 8 and June 2 at 3.)

Movement Research—Presenting Alexis Eupierre (in a solo work), Daniel Lepkoff (in two solo pieces), and Vicky Shick and Deborah Gladstein (in a duet). (Ethnic Folk Arts Center, 179 Varick St. June 1-3 at 8:30. Tickets at the door on the nights of the performances.)

Polish American Folk Dance Company—A fifty-member group in a single performance of regional dances. (Alice Tully Hall. 362-1911. June 2 at 5:30.)

SUPPORT SYSTEM

Men with blowtorches and shovels recently finished gutting the interior of the eighty-four-year-old post office, behind Grand Central Terminal, and above the remaining six-story limestone-and-granite shell is rising a steel-frame thirty-two-story office tower, at the rate of one new floor every five days. In a recession-hit city, where the rarity of new construction has made what little there is almost welcome, this project is particularly dramatic; if you walk past it soon, you will be able to see evidence of how the shell was transformed to support its tremendous added burden. Through the second-story windows on 45th Street, just west of Lexington Avenue, you can see huge diagonal trusses, and if you peek through the doorway at the building's northeast corner you can see a ten-by-twenty-by-twenty-foot concrete block, the base of a "megacolumn" that serves to anchor the tower against the wind.

Soon strips of aluminum trim will sparkle on the building's upper stories, and green airport-runway lights will shine at night along the building's uppermost edge—they were chosen, says architect David Childs, of Skidmore Owings & Merrill, because they are the only lights intense enough to hold their own on the skyline. A tractor-size machine is currently pumping cement to the tower's shoulders, where workmen are pouring nearly five inches of concrete onto corrugated-steel decking, to form floors, and disguising steel beams with slabs of pink-and-gray granite. The men move in balletic synchrony, and they all stop simultaneously for lunch.

NIGHT LIFE

Joan Osborne is not a particularly well-kept secret—nor should she be. The twenty-eight-year-old, Kentucky-born blues singer and her band have been playing three or four gigs a week for some time now—at Delta 88, Wetlands, and Continental Divide, among other places—and she was named Best Unsigned Artist at this year's New York Music Awards. We saw the tail end of Osborne's set at a Planned Parenthood benefit a while back, and, because it was clear from the agitated state of the crowd that we had missed something, we made a mental note to call on her again.

We finally caught up with Osborne at Delta 88 a week or so ago. (She'll be there again May 29 and June 5.) Osborne's band plays a bright, pop-inflected variety of blues. She herself has a wonderfully raspy voice, over which she exerts an extraordinary amount of control, whether she's doing covers ("Son-of-a-Preacher Man," "Me and Bobby McGee") or originals ("Match Burn Twice," "Fingerprints," "Wild World"). On the night we saw her, Osborne was slinking about the stage in a sleeveless floral dress, lolling her head around dreamily, shaking her kinky red hair, and clearly enjoying herself. She said very little between numbers, opting instead to let out growling variations on the "aaaahhh yeah"/ "allllll *right*" theme. By the end of the set, Osborne's guitarist was waving his baseball cap in front of the singer's face, trying, unsuccessfully, to cool her down.

(A highly arbitrary listing, in which boldface type is used to pick out a few of the more notable performers in town. . . . ¶ Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives that are subject to last-minute change; it is therefore advisable to call ahead.)

Ballroom, 253 W. 28th St. (244-3005)—A tony cabaret attained by passing through an opulent tapas restaurant, where wicker baskets overflow with fruit and vegetables and a row of hams hangs over the bar; if you haven't had dinner, you may never make it to the show. **RITA MC KENZIE** is here through June 1, in a tribute to Ethel Merman, whom she describes as "bright, brassy, and ballsy." The Brazilian singer **ELBA RAMALHO,** who wears outfits that might have come from Liberace's estate sale, and whose music is a hybrid of samba and Las Vegas, begins a run on June 2. Show times vary.

Birdland, 2745 Broadway, at 105th St. (749-2228)—The jazz personnel turns over nearly every night at this airy, loftlike restaurant-bar, in the gray zone between Zabar's and Columbia. Some may cry gentrification at the sight of the pastel walls, the potted greenery, and the bar crowded with Frascati sippers, but the floor-to-ceiling windows make for some fine Broadway-viewing. **VIC JURIS, RODNEY JONES,** and **GENE BERTONCINI** participate in a Jazz Guitar Summit May 28-30. Baritone saxophonist **RONNIE CUBER** leads a group May 31-June 1, and the Dennis Di Blasio quartet spends the evening here on June 2. Music from nine. Dining.

Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—A jazz club that would be a perfect stop on a bus tour (there's even a souvenir shop that sells Kodak). It's a good idea to make a reservation and show up well in advance. **GEORGE HOWARD** will be here May 28-June 2; the **MODERN JAZZ QUARTET,** which has been doing its fastidious swinging for forty years and has over four hundred pieces in its repertoire, begins work on June 4. First set at nine. Dining.

Bradley's, 70 University Pl., at 11th St. (228-6440)—A neighborhood bar in the heart of

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N.Y.U. country. It's advisable to get all your talking done between sets, because once the first chord is struck the audience here—with a little help from the management—becomes as quiet as a church congregation. The piano-bass team of **MULGREW MILLER** and **ROBERT HURST** is at work through June 1. Music from nine-forty-five. Dining.

Carlyle Hotel, Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the doorman district, features discreet waiters, wraparound pastel murals, and singer-pianist **BOBBY SHORT,** who's in the midst of one of his leisurely springtime stretches here. Sets at nine-thirty and eleven-thirty Tuesdays through Saturdays. . . . ¶ Across the hall, in Bemelmans' Bar, **BARBARA CARROLL** presides at the piano from nine-thirty Tuesdays through Saturdays.

Cat Club, 76 E. 13th St. (505-0090)—Bell-bottoms and peace signs aren't the only nostalgia craze in town: at the Cat Club on Sunday nights, the nineteen-thirties are in vogue. On other nights of the week, the club attracts a scruffy leather-and-lace crowd, but Sundays belong to the Swing Dance Society, whose passion is the Lindy Hop, a dance named after Charles Lindbergh. The dancers are young and old, graceful and flatfooted; the drink of choice is the Swing Dance Punch; the staff looks alternately bemused and bewildered by the genteel crowd. **SWING FEVER,** the house band up the road a piece at Cafe Society, performs on June 2. Music from eight to midnight.

Condon's, 117 E. 15th St. (254-0960)—Jazz clubs aren't always known for their romantic atmosphere, but Condon's earns higher marks than most. It's a low-ceilinged basement establishment, with lemon walls and abundant candlelight. They rearranged the furniture here a while back, so that now a greater number of people look at the stage rather than at a pole. A quintet consisting of **ANDREW CYRILLE, HANNIBAL PETERSON, OLIVER LAKE, REGGIE WORKMAN,** and **ADEGOKE STEVE COLSON** holds sway May 28-June 2; the **MICHAEL CARVIN** quintet begins its week-long stay on June 4. Music after nine.

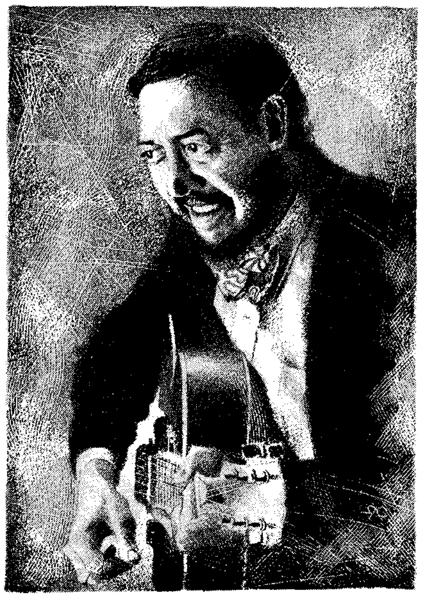
Continental Divide, 25 Third Ave., at St. Marks Pl. (529-6924)—Hipsters, posers, N.Y.U. students, the occasional skinhead—a typical East Village bar. The motif is prehistoric punk—a Stone Age mural, assorted toy dinosaurs and pterodactyls—and on peak nights there's a take-no-prisoners atmosphere. Shows Sundays through Thursdays at ten, and Fridays and Saturdays at eleven.

Delta 88, 332 Eighth Ave., at 26th St. (924-3499)—A tin-roofed, hubcap-awninged, soul-food-serving, chicken-shack theme bar. Exhibits include a rusted Orange Crush sign, a Pat Boone record jacket, bottle caps spelling out "Welcome," and other peckerwood flotsam. (If this place weren't a restaurant, it could be a flea market.) The clientele is mainly Northern urban. There's live music most nights, including gospel on Mondays and zydeco on Thursdays. On Wednesdays, **JOAN OSBORNE** is currently singing to a crowded room. Shows after nine. Chicken-fried steak, deep-fried crawdads (a.k.a. Cajun popcorn), and other exotic Southern fare.

Fat Tuesday's, 190 Third Ave., at 17th St. (533-7902)—The seating arrangement in this long, narrow, red-velvet-and-mirror-walled basement makes flying coach seem roomy; nevertheless, it's one of the city's top jazz spots—thanks largely to the club's talent bookers. Pianist **RANDY WESTON,** whose playing has been influenced by both Monk and Ellington, leads a trio through June 2; the fine bebop guitarist **KENNY BURRELL** appears with the **CEDAR WALTON** trio as of June 4. On Mondays, guitarist-inventor **LES PAUL** leads a trio. Music from eight. Dining.

Fortune Garden Pavilion, 209 E. 49th St. (753-0101)—With jazz you get eggroll. At this posh-looking two-floor Chinese restaurant, tucked into a midtown skyscraper, you'll find a lot of businesspeople and a lot of hanging plants. In the middle of the main dining room, you'll also find a Steinway grand, which currently belongs to the reclusive Cape Codder **DAVE MC KENNA.** McKenna, a hulking man with white hair and an aquiline nose, is an inventive, hard-swinging pianist with a strong left hand. Music from six-thirty.

Knitting Factory, 47 E. Houston St., near Mulberry St. (219-3055)—Situated in a neighborhood that boasts the Puck Building to the west and a host of windshield washers to the east, this modest space provides a forum for free-thinking musicians. Beat and melody are optional, "music" and "noise" relative terms. **DON BYRON,** a dreadlocked clarinettist who in one life is a member of the downtown avant-garde posse, will be seen here in his other incarnation on June 1—as a klezmer artist, playing the music of the fifties Borscht Belt king Mickey Katz. Other events: Wreckless Eric on May 29; Miracle Room on May 31; Ronald Shannon Jackson on June 3; and Nora York and Reggie Nicholson on June 4. Music after nine.



Barney Kessel at the Village Vanguard

Maxwell's, 1039 Washington St., Hoboken (1-201 798-4064)—A small-pond club for big-fish bands. There's not much here to look at: it's a back-room affair with a dingy stage and a baby grand someone apparently tried to cover with papier-mâché. Still, the bookers know their college-radio playlists. May 31: the **ORIGINAL SINS** and Wreckless Eric; June 1: Speed the Plough and Cordelia's Dad; June 5: **KITCHENS OF DISTINCTION** and Raw Youth.

Rainbow & Stars, 30 Rockefeller Plaza. (632-5000)—A great, pricey cabaret in the sky. Singer **MAUREEN MC GOVERN,** who's currently in residence here, was once known (to her consternation) as "the disaster-theme queen"—she sang "The Morning After," from "The Poseidon Adventure," as well as songs from "Towering Inferno" and "Superman." Since then, Ms. McGovern, who has a powerful, versatile four-octave voice, has made a name for herself as a cabaret singer. Shows from nine. Dining. Closed Sundays and Mondays.

Red Blazer Too, 349 W. 46th St. (262-3112)—A place where a fella and a gal can put on the feedbag, get a little tight, and cut a rug. Mondays belong to Howie Wyeth's ragtime trio, Tuesdays to **VINCE GIORDANO AND THE NIGHTHAWKS,** Wednesdays to Tropical Force, Fridays to Sam Ulano and his Basin Street Six, and Saturdays to Bob Cantwell's band. Dale Chandler and the Sophisticates hold forth on May 30. Show times vary.

Sounds of Brazil, 204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (243-4940)—A big, cheerful room, painted a light tropical blue, where you can pick 'em up and set 'em down to sounds from Brazil, Africa, the Caribbean, and elsewhere. Ample seating for the contemplative. Talibe, a Senegalese group, performs on May 28; the **OHIO PLAYERS,** one of the better seventies hard-funk bands, will be in on May 29. Closed Sundays. Dining.

Sweet Basil, 88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (242-1785)—An itinerary stop for the international jazz groupies who, on any given night, can be seen roaming the streets of the Village. Up front, there's a glass-enclosed sidewalk café; in back is a larger room, with a pressed-tin ceiling, red brick, and more pinewood than a ski lodge. Saxophonist and flutist **JAMES MOODY,** who started out under the tutelage of Dizzy Gillespie in the forties, leads his quartet May 28-June 2; **MC COY TYNER'S** trio begins a stint on June 4. An electrified big band belonging to trumpeter Miles Evans is in action on Mondays. Tee-off time is ten. Dining.

Sweetwaters, 170 Amsterdam Ave., at 67th St. (873-4100)—Pink carnations on the tables, shrimp creole on the menu, and a sunken dance floor with a circa-1975 mirrored disco ball. The stage, dominated by a white grand piano, is usually given over to soul and R. & B. acts. Saxophonist **STANLEY TURRENTINE** is on hand May 31-June 1. Shows at nine and eleven.

Tramps, 45 W. 21st St. (727-7788)—Located on a Chelsea block that's like an urban Disneyland (Chelsea Billiards, an indoor miniature-golf course, a trendy all-night diner, Limelight around the corner), this roller-rink-size bar-and-restaurant is a lot bigger and a lot slicker than the old Tramps, but the emphasis on solid rock and blues remains. Music from eight on weeknights and from eight-thirty on Fridays and Saturdays.

Village Gate, 160 Bleecker St. (475-5120)—Pop singer-songwriter and guitarist **MARSHALL CRENSHAW,** who is coming out of hiding with a strong new album, titled "Life Is Too Short," performs on May 29, at eight and ten, in the main room. . . . ¶ The **SANTI DEBRIANO** trio works out in the airy space known as the Terrace Bar May 29-June 2. Harpist **DAPHNE HELLMAN** and **HELLMAN'S ANGELS** hold forth every Tuesday.

Village Vanguard, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—The late Max Gordon, who opened this holiest of jazz shrines in 1935, once described the club's early patrons as a mix of "poets, W.P.A. writers, hustlers, broads on the make, and moochers." The **RED HOLLOWAY** quartet plays through June 2, and guitarist **BARNEY KESSEL,** whose five-decade career has included stints with Artie Shaw and Oscar Peterson, leads a trio here as of June 4. The seventeen-piece **VANGUARD JAZZ ORCHESTRA** holds sway on Mondays. Music after nine-thirty.

Wetlands, 161 Hudson St. (966-4225)—Two floors of no-nuke veggie entertainment and consciousness-raising. Listen to bands play in the Summer of Love-muralled back room; buy a tie-dyed T-shirt at the Volkswagen-bus curio shop; catch up on current events at the bulletin board and community calendar. Or, if you'd rather just be mellow, crash out in the basement hippie love pad. A few of this week's offerings: Solar Circus (May 28), Rick Danko (May 29), the Subdudes and Acoustic Junction (May 30), and the Authority and D'Tripp (May 31). Shows from ten.

Zinno, 126 W. 13th St. (924-5182)—One of those snazzy, awninged eateries you've seen nestled amid brownstones in the Village and always wondered about. Pianist **KIRK LIGHTSEY** and bassist **CECIL MC BEE** perform May 28-June 1; pianist **GEOFF KEEZER** and bassist **PETER WASHINGTON** begin a week-long stint on June 3. Music from eight.

EDGE OF NIGHT LIFE

"Vicarious Thrills"

(A Play in One Scene)

PLACE: Elevator, 711 Fifth Avenue (home of Columbia and Tri-Star Pictures).

Time: A recent Thursday, 8 P.M.

Scene: A pretty woman is already on board, listening to Prince's "Graffiti Bridge" on headphones. She sings along, Jean Hagen-style. On eleven, her equally attractive but Walkmanless friend gets on. The wired-for-sound woman speaks over the tape, which remains on during the subsequent dialogue.

Pretty Woman (*singing to herself*): "Nothing comes from talkers but sound . . ." (*Speaking, as friend enters*): You still here?

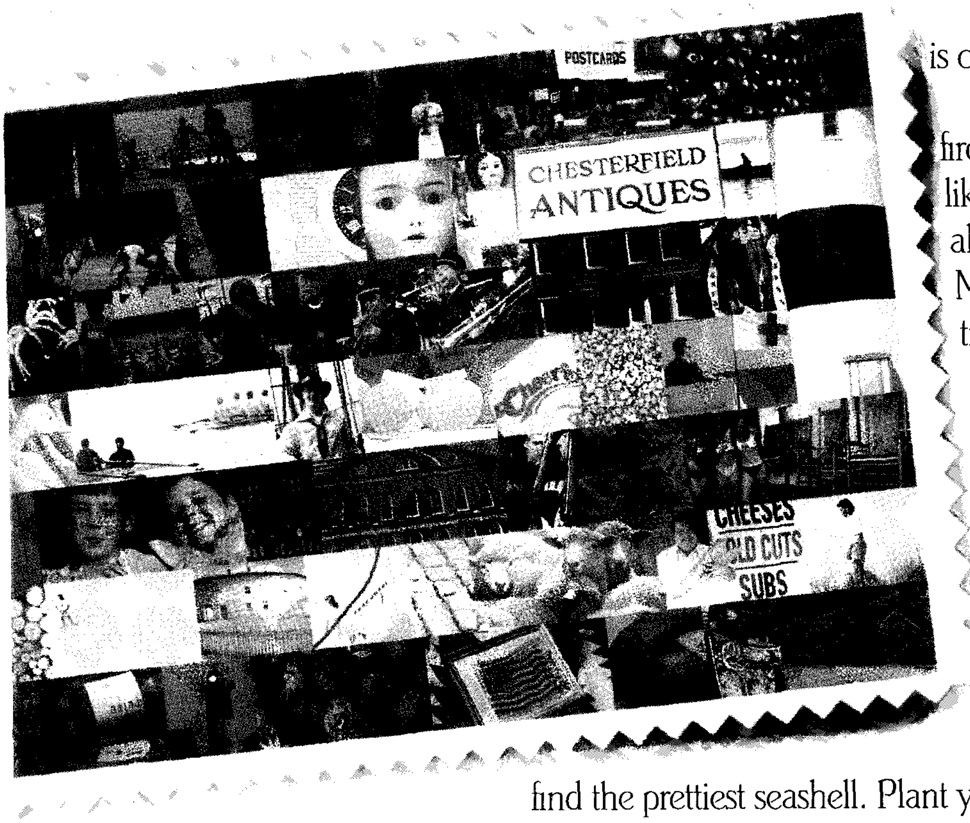
Equally Attractive Friend: I couldn't leave till I heard from my friend in Cannes. She saw *everything*.

Pretty Woman: So did they really meet?

Friend: Yeah. You can't believe what she said to Sean—"Nice to see you"!

Pretty Woman: She's really matured.

WHAT'S RED, WHITE, AND BLUE AND LASTS FROM MAY THROUGH OCTOBER?



Summer in Massachusetts is one long celebration.

Sometimes it feels like fireworks. Other times it feels like a breeze. But the feeling is always here. When you're in Massachusetts in the summertime, you know it.

Stroll through Boston's Public Garden on a morning in May. Bend down and breathe in the flowers that line every path. Watch the swans easing around the pond.

Spend a July afternoon chasing waves on a Cape Cod beach at low tide. See who can find the prettiest seashell. Plant yourself in the warm sand and count all the shades of blue in the water and sky.

Drive up the coast to Gloucester some August evening, put on a bib (that's half the fun), and have yourself a nice, bright red lobster. Watch the sun melt the summer dew off the cranberry bogs in Plymouth. Or spend an October weekend hiking in the Berkshires.

It doesn't matter what you do when you come to Massachusetts. It doesn't matter who you are, or when you visit. You can't help but feel refreshed.

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FRIEND: I think she's found herself.

PRETTY WOMAN: I better find *myself* one SM with J [translation: straight man with job] at your party or you're gonna hear about it.

FRIEND: Show off them implants. No oxford cloth.

PRETTY WOMAN: They're almost healed.

FRIEND: In the nick of beach time.

PRETTY WOMAN: Sunscreen number four, here I come. What time should I get there?

FRIEND: My brother's friends are coming at ten, so primp accordingly.

PRETTY WOMAN: I'll be there at nine, lock myself in your bathroom for an hour, and emerge like Botticelli's Venus.

FRIEND: From the toilet.

PRETTY WOMAN: Nice. Just call me the Blond Ambition Tour, Part 2.

FRIEND: Bob says his friend Chris looks like Sean.

PRETTY WOMAN: Eight-thirty, I'll be there at eight-thirty. Gotta go. Late for my waxing.

FRIEND: No patterns, now. Don't want to scare the natives.

PRETTY WOMAN (*exits singing*): "But the world still goes around and 'round."

IN ANOTHER CATEGORY—PERFORMANCE ART, ETC.

CIRQUE DU SOLEIL—Final performances of these aerialists, clowns, jugglers, and contortionists. (Battery Park City. Through June 2. For tickets, call 509-5550.)

JUDY DWORIN—Presents "Distant Voices Coming Near," a dance-theatre work. (St. Ann's Church, 157 Montague St., Brooklyn. 1-718 636-1687. May 31-June 1 at 8.)

LA MAMA—May 29-June 2 at 7:30: Steven Berkoff's tone poem "East" will be performed by Paul Finocchiaro, Stephanie Hunt, Delia MacDougall, Dennis Matthews, and Joel Mullennix. . . . ¶ May 30-June 1 at 10: Benito Gutmacher in "Business Business," a multilingual one-man show. . . . ¶ June 3 at 8: Lisa Kron, Dominique Dibbel, and David Sedaris, each performing solo. . . . ¶ June 5-8 at 8: Dramatic and musical meditations on the Gulf War by Vanessa Redgrave, Allen Ginsberg, Phoebe Légère, and many others. (74A E. 4th St. 475-7710.)

DANCE THEATRE WORKSHOP—May 30-June 2 at 8: Ain Gordon presents his new theatre work, "Get in the Car." . . . ¶ May 31-June 1 at 11: Louise Smith in "The House of the Mighty Mother That Travels Across the Sky." (219 W. 19th St. 924-0077.)

P.S. 122—May 30-June 2 at 7: A two-part evening; David Rousseve and his company perform at P.S. 122, and then Lavender Light (a gospel choir) and Mr. Rousseve perform together at St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie . . . . ¶ May 30-June 2 at 9:30: Lisa Kron in "Facing Life's Problems." . . . ¶ May 31-June 1 at 10: Bill T. Jones and dancers in a benefit for Movement Research. (150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288.)

ART

THE passions of all the Americas have been felt more keenly on the New York art scene lately than at any time since the nineteen-thirties, when Diego Rivera was populist king. Now that Rivera's wife, the great invalid Frida Kahlo, has risen from her celestial chair to outshine her burly husband and claim her place—alongside Maria Callas, perhaps—as high-cult priestess, we must remind ourselves that hers is but one voice from the past among a vast, varied New World chorus. The resurgent popularity of hybrid forms like installation seems to be creating an especially hospitable urban climate for Latin-American and Caribbean artists—artists who cut their teeth, as it were, on the ex-votos, *santos*, and *milagros* that make every humble local shrine an installation full of collective significance and splendor.

The "Nuyorican" experience is alive in the work of Pepón Osorio, who moved to New York from Puerto Rico in 1975. One of the first pieces you see at El Museo del Barrio, currently the scene of an Osorio retrospective (Fifth Avenue at 104th Street; through August 4), is a fancy, fake-Venetian chandelier further ornamented by a trove of tacky tchotchkes, ranging from dominoes and water pistols to plastic ferns and tiny, brittle street-stand dolls. "Every Project in the Bronx has a chandelier, you know," says Osorio, as if trying to explain the appeal of this poetically irresistible icon to a congregation of Unitarians from Salem, Massachusetts.

Other lightly nostalgic and comic charmers—some the results of performance collaborations with Merián Soto, the artist's choreographer wife—include "La Cama," a room-size work, with bed and coverlet, dedicated to the artist's nanny, and "Broken Hearts," a set piece, featuring luggage, about the dashed dreams of immigrants from the south. But there is also a frilly white cradle containing the doll-figure of "Maria Cristina Martinez Olmedo," a dark-skinned incubator-baby in extremis, and an ambitious new installation called "The Wake," a life-size replica—recalling recent pieces by the Belgian Guillaume Bijl—of a funeral parlor full of coffins and body bags. It is a harrowing depiction of AIDS, both solemn and almost grotesquely disorienting in a museum setting. Osorio, who has been involved in social work, displays a certain sincere earnestness that is intentional and heartfelt. This show is titled "Con To' los Hierros," which translates loosely as "Giving It All You've Got."

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St.—"The Sculpture of Indonesia" includes more than a hundred and thirty-five bronzes, life-size stone sculptures, and ceremonial objects dating from the eighth century to the fifteenth. Through Aug. 18. . . . ¶ A large exhibition of paintings, drawings, and etchings by Eugène Delacroix (1798-1863). Also on view is a sketchbook from Delacroix's 1828 trip to Touraine. Through June 16. . . . ¶ Illuminated pages and decorative designs from Islamic books produced in Iran, Turkey, and India from the fourteenth century through the nineteenth. Through Aug. 18. . . . **NOTE:** The museum's roof garden, planted with nine sculptures by Rodin, is open when the weather permits. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:15, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, 11 W. 53rd St.—Ninety-five paintings, collages, and gouaches by Ad Reinhardt (1913-67). Starts June 1. . . . ¶ Designs for South American gardens and parks by the Brazilian landscape architect Roberto Burle Marx. Through Aug. 13. . . . ¶ An installation of a huge blanket of stainless-steel hair, with one end suspended from the ceiling, by Kyoko Kumai, a Japanese fibre artist. Although the work is sophisticated in its use of materials, it's sculpturally uninteresting. Through June 18. . . . ¶ Fifty-five prints from the eighties by Johns, Hockney, Rauschenberg, Lichtenstein, Dine, Rosenquist, and Stella. Through Aug. 13. . . . ¶ "Mean Streets" is a show of street photographs from the forties through the eighties by such artists as Lisette Model, Garry Winogrand, and Todd Webb. Through July 16. (Open daily, except Wednesdays, 11 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 9.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM, Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—The museum is closed for renovation until autumn.

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART, Madison Ave. at 75th St.—The Biennial: work by artists whose stars began to rise in the fifties and sixties is on the second floor; work by artists who emerged in the seventies and eighties is on the third floor; and work by late-eighties and nineties artists is on the fourth floor. The "AIDS Timeline," by Group Material, is in the lobby. Through June 16. (Open Tuesdays, 1 to 8, with no admission charge after 6; Wednesdays through Saturdays, 11 to 5; Sundays, noon to 6.)

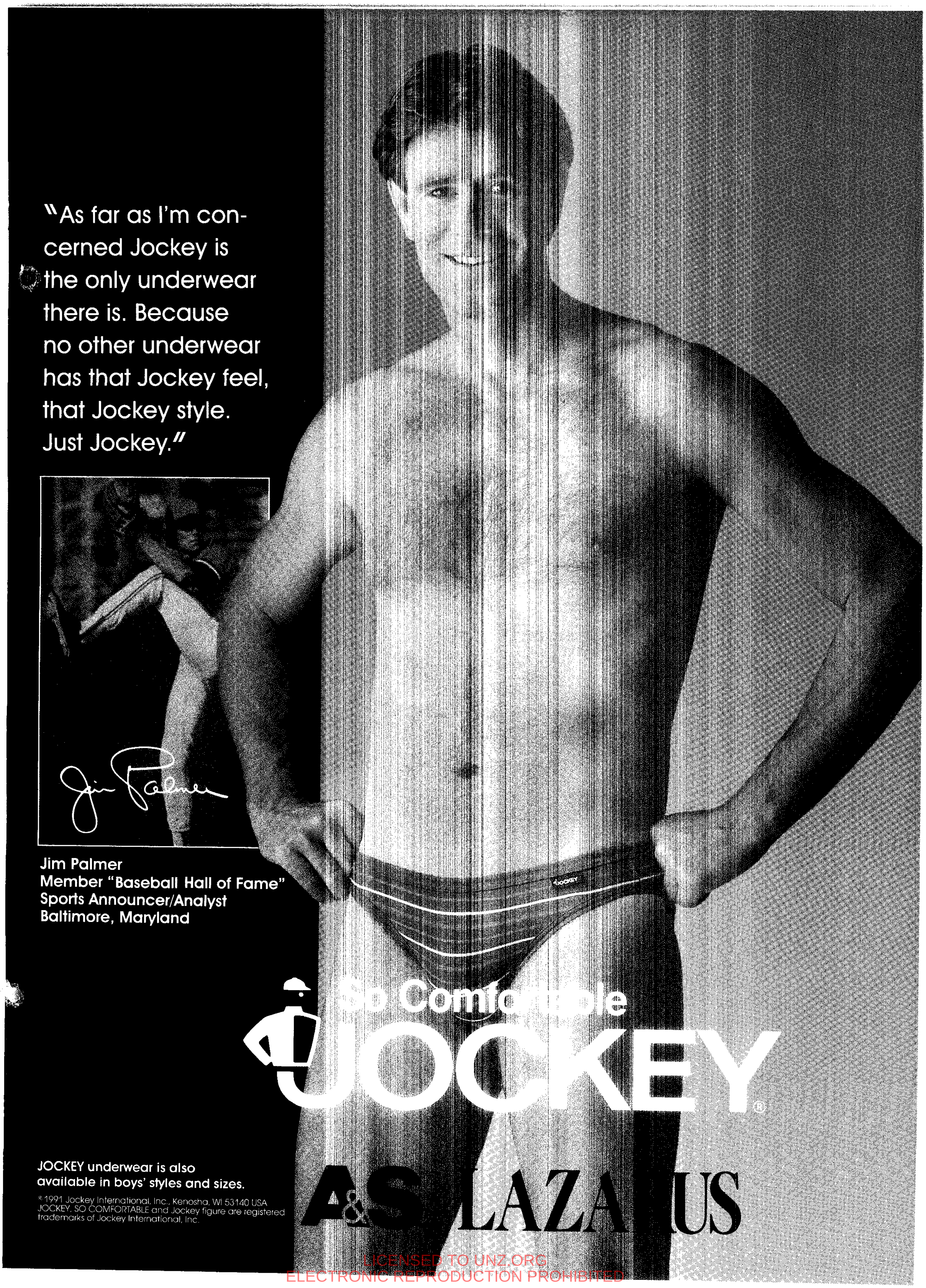
BROOKLYN MUSEUM, Eastern Parkway—Leon Golub's first three-dimensional installation, titled "WorldWide." Through June 16. . . . ¶ A display of Impressionist paintings and works on paper, titled "Monet and His Contemporaries." Included are five works by Monet, and others by Degas, Toulouse-Lautrec, van Gogh, and Picasso. Through June 2. . . . ¶ Forty works of art from Oceania (mostly from the Sepik and Ramu river basins in New Guinea), including three-inch-long fishhooks, three monumental carved-wood "guardians," and a skull rack made of palm, raffia, and bamboo. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY, Central Park W. at 79th St.—An exhibition that examines the ecosystems of tropical rain forests around the world, such as those in the Congo basin, the Amazon basin, Madagascar, and Borneo. Through June 2. (Open Mondays through Thursdays, and Sundays, 10 to 5:45; Fridays and Saturdays, 10 to 8:45.)

AMERICAN ACADEMY AND INSTITUTE OF ARTS AND LETTERS, Broadway at 155th St.—The Academy's annual exhibition of works by newly elected artists, including Robert Arneson, Jane Wilson, William T. Wiley, and Shirley Smith. Through June 9. (Open daily, except Mondays, 1 to 4.)

ASIA SOCIETY, Park Ave. at 70th St.—"The Story of a Painting: A Korean Buddhist Treasure from the Mary and Jackson Burke Foundation." This scholar's dream show takes a single work of art and casts about in several different historical directions at once. Although the painting under examination, known as the Burke Triad, is faded and hardly a crowd pleaser, it's an important work in the history of Korean art, a rapidly expanding field. When the Japanese invaded, Korea in 1592, they destroyed or pillaged pretty much all of the local culture, and the Burke Triad, which depicts the Buddha and two attendant bodhisattvas, is a rare example of pre-invasion Buddhist art. The show also provides a mini-history of the triad form, a view of Korean Buddhist monastic life, and a sampling of later Korean painting, much of which has a marvellous flattened, Netherlandish space. It's a tightly packed display, fascinating and at times confusing. On the whole it offers a somewhat loopy view, mostly due to the breadth of the subjects and the smallness of the exhibition. But there are several rich works to savor. Through July 28. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 11 to 6; Sundays, noon to 5.)

BRONX MUSEUM OF THE ARTS, 1040 Grand Concourse—"The Nearest Edge of the World," an exhibition of works in several mediums by



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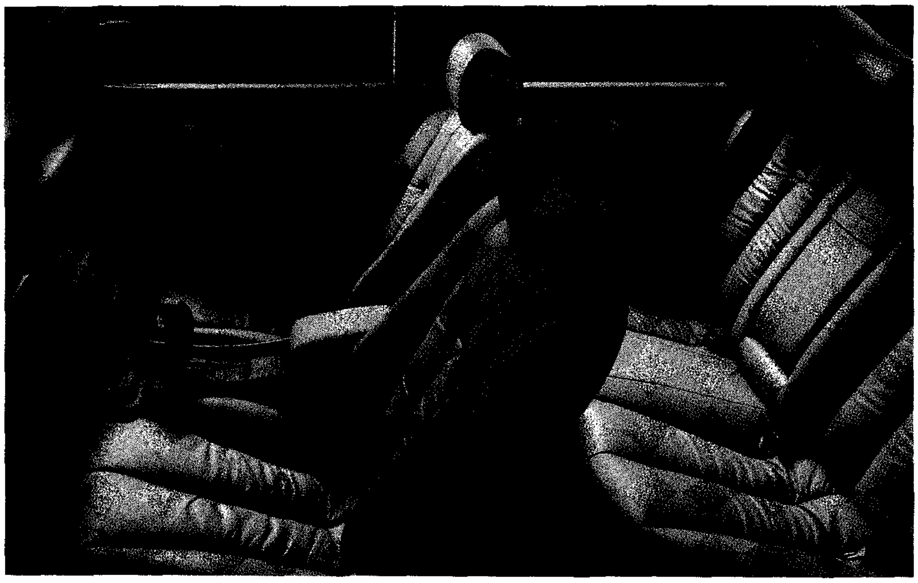

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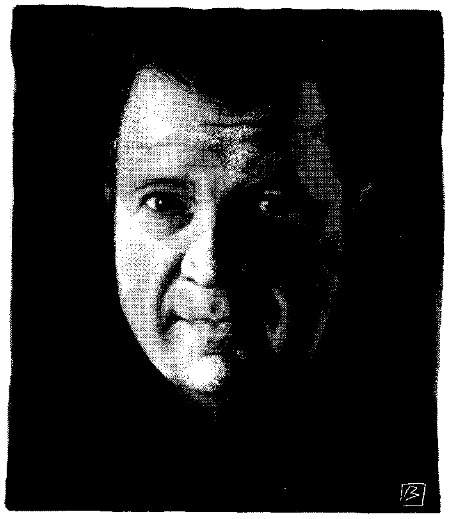
GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN



Ad Reinhardt at MOMA

nine contemporary artists from Cuba. Through Aug. 4. (Open weekdays, except Fridays, 10 to 4:30; Sundays, 11 to 4:30.)

China Institute, 125 E. 65th St.—Forty-one examples of ancient Chinese bronze vessels, weapons, and personal ornaments ranging from the nineteenth century B.C. (the beginning of the Erlitou era) to the third century A.D. (the end of the Han dynasty). Through June 15. (Open Mondays through Saturdays, 10 to 5.)

Frick Collection, 1 E. 70th St.—"From Pontormo to Seurat," a show of sixty-one drawings from the Art Institute of Chicago, including works by Gainsborough, Géricault, Redon, Delacroix, and Degas. Through July 7. (Open daily, except Mondays, 10 to 6; Sundays, 1 to 6.)

Jewish Museum, at the New-York Historical Society, 170 Central Park W., at 77th St.—"Painting a Place in America" gathers the work of fifty Jewish-American painters and sculptors working in New York between 1900 and 1945. Among the artists represented are Adolph Gottlieb, Louise Nevelson, Chaim Gross, Mark Rothko, and Max Weber. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, and Sundays, 10 to 5; Fridays, 10 to 3.)

Morgan Library, 29 E. 36th St.—"Mozart: Prodigy of Nature." A comprehensive exhibition of all things Mozart. The show includes more than fifty manuscripts, from four pieces composed at age five to a first draft of the Requiem; early letters home from his first trip to Italy (December, 1769) and his last letter to his father (April, 1787); and his "Verzeichnüss aller meiner Werke" ("Catalogue of All My Works"), which he kept for the last seven years of his life. Through Aug. 4. . . . ¶ Eighteenth-century drawings, from the library's collection, by the Venetian masters Tiepolo, Guardi, and Canaletto. Through Aug. 4. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10:30 to 5; Sundays, 1 to 5.)

National Academy of Design, Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—In the exhibition "Illustrating Nature: The Art of Botany," the New York Botanical Garden's collection is represented by ninety-five watercolors, pen-and-ink drawings, books, and dried plant specimens. (Open Tuesdays, noon to 8, with no admission charge after 5; Wednesdays through Sundays, noon to 5.)

The New Museum, 583 Broadway—"Africa Explores: Twentieth-Century African Art" presents more than a hundred art works in various mediums. The works are divided into five categories: "Traditional," "New Functional," "Urban," "International," and "Extinct." The Center for African Art has organized the exhibition, and it runs simultaneously in their galleries, at 54 E. 68th St. (Open daily except Mondays; opens Sundays at noon.) Through Aug. 18. . . . ¶ In a show called "Embodying Faith," five contemporary artists tackle the theme of the relationship between the physical and the spiritual in Christianity. Through Aug. 18. . . . ¶ In the museum's Broadway windows is an installation by the Catalan artist Perejaume, titled "Pintura i Representació," that consists of two visitor-accessible rows of theatre seats. Through Aug. 18. . . . ¶ "Eclipse of the Earth," an installation by Kazuo Katase. Through Aug. 18. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Sundays, noon to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, noon to 8.)

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New-York Historical Society, 170 Central Park W., at 77th St.—Fifty paintings, drawings, photographs, and decorative objects that were collected by Andrew Carnegie (1835-1919). Through Aug. 4. . . . ¶ "Justice Rendered" is a show of forty documents and art works related to the three-hundred-year history of the New York Supreme Court. Through July 7. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)

New York Public Library, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St.—"Kingdoms of Land, Sea, and Sky" includes a hundred and eighty zoological woodcuts, engravings, and watercolors by artists and naturalists such as Albrecht Dürer, John James Audubon, Edward Lear, and Maria Sibylla Merian. Through Aug. 24. (Gottesman Exhibition Hall. Open Mondays through Wednesdays, 11 to 6; Thursdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6.) . . . ¶ Sixty-three prints by Reginald Marsh (1898-1954), depicting New York scenes from the twenties and thirties. Through June 29. (Third Floor Gallery. Open Mondays through Wednesdays, 11 to 6; Thursdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6.) . . . ¶ A display of recently acquired rare books, manuscripts, and letters, including Joseph Conrad's manuscript for "The Secret Sharer" and Washington Irving's manuscript for "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow." (Berg Collection. Open Mondays through Wednesdays, 11 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 10 to 6.)

New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Lincoln Center—"Mozart's World," yet another show devoted to the composer, presents more than a hundred prints by artists of the day, first editions and manuscripts ("Don Giovanni" and "Le Nozze de Figaro," among others), and elaborate period costumes. There are also related exhibits in the music, dance, and theatre departments of the library. Through Aug. 31. (Open Mondays and Thursdays, noon to 8; Wednesdays and Fridays, noon to 6; Saturdays, 10 to 6.)

Isamu Noguchi Garden Museum, 32-37 Vernon Blvd., at 33rd Road, Long Island City—Noguchi (1904-88), one of the twentieth century's singular talents, designed this oasis for more than two hundred and fifty of his sculptures. It contains a wide range of his work—from the early surrealistic biomorphic sculptures to several types of stone carvings—and documentation of his prodigious public art. The centerpiece of the museum is a peaceful, ivy-walled garden dotted with the artist's works. (Open Wednesdays and Saturdays, 11 to 6.)

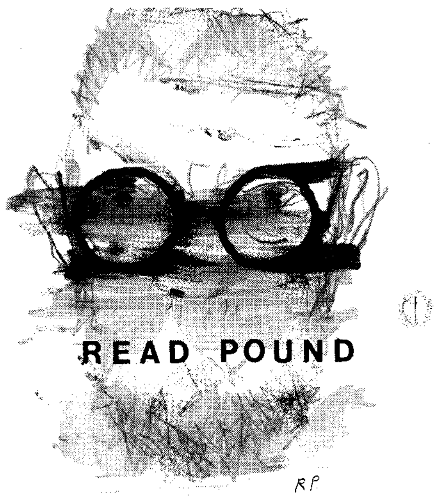
Queens Museum, Flushing Meadow Park—"Interrelations and Migration: Contemporary Sculpture from Germany" is an exhibition of four artists—Erwin Heerich, Norbert Kricke, Abraham David Christian, and Katsuhito Nishikawa—who have worked in Düsseldorf. Through July 7. (Open Tuesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, noon to 5.)

Studio Museum in Harlem, 144 W. 125th St.—A retrospective of works by Romare Bearden (1912-88), which includes a hundred and forty-one oils, collages, and watercolors. Through Aug. 11. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 1 to 6.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

(Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.)

Brice Marden—A midsize show of new drawings and etchings by our great aesthete abstractionist. Marden's line has been making like the bacchants for the last couple of years, nowhere so freely, perhaps, as on paper. Where the paintings have a sonorous ceremonial rhythm, the drawings suggest jitterbugs and dervish whirls—rigorous, mind-altering dances. Marden's greens, alternately mossy and sun-faded, are themselves a trip and a half. Through June 28. (Marks, 1018 Madison Ave., at 79th St.)



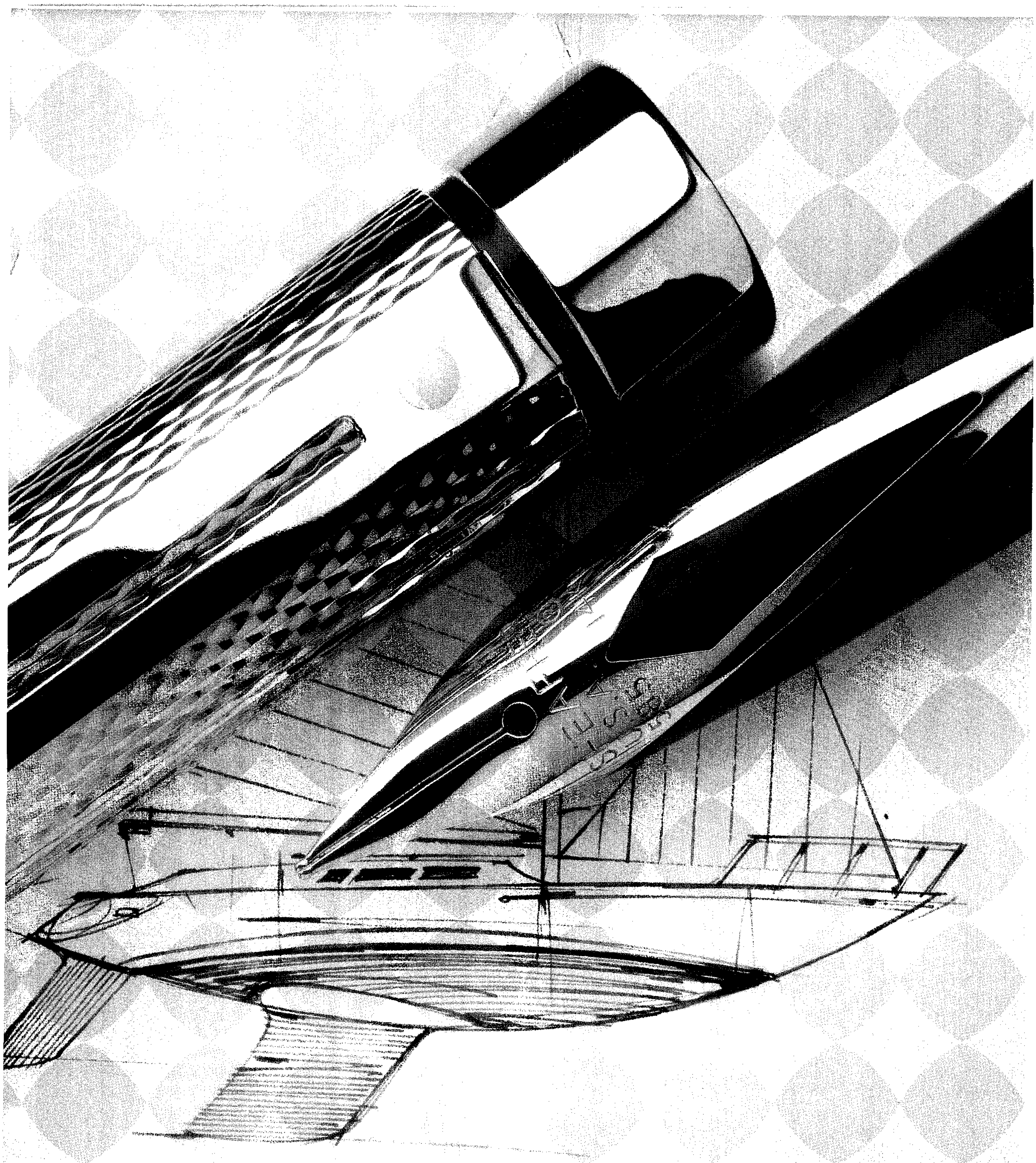
Self-portrait by Richard Pettibone

Short List—**MARCEL BROODTHAERS,** Werner, 21 E. 67th St. (through July 3); **FRITZ BULTMAN,** Schlesinger, 24 E. 73rd St., and Kouros, 23 E. 73rd St. (through June 15); **JEAN DUBUFFET,** Elkon, 18 E. 81st St. (through June 8); **SAM FRANCIS,** Gagosian, 980 Madison Ave., at 76th St. (through June 29); **ROBERT MOTHERWELL,** Knoedler, 19 E. 70th St. (through June 28); **KENNETH NOLAND,** Salander-O'Reilly, 20 E. 79th St. (open Mondays, through June 29); **FRITZ SCHOLDER,** Alexander, 980 Madison Ave., at 76th St. (through June 22).

GALLERIES—57TH STREET AREA

Group Show—Maura Sheehan, Kim Jones, and Brett De Palma are not, in common parlance, "uptown artists," which is why it's fun to see their work at the normally proper Herstand gallery. Sheehan is known for madcap installations of a tinselly charm, on themes involving geopolitics and the magic of ritual. "Trade Winds," her work here, is an enticingly summery piece that includes jalousies sporting scenic painting, an electric fan decked out in boating flags, piles of white and brown sugar connoting the North and the South, and a map on which Latin America looms especially large. Jones' installation is recognizable at once by its clusters of sticks suggesting bursts of shrapnel and by its overall device of splattered mud—a bit as if Richard Long had gone to combat instead of on country walks. Here, however, Jones' familiar working style assumes an air of remote formality. It is De Palma who gains most from the trappings of refinement. Not an installation artist at all, he deploys an arsenal of styles ranging from Cubism to psychedelia, and his paintings, however polished their frames, and for all their domestication, are really wild at heart—a lot wilder, in fact, than Fauve art. Through June 15. (24 W. 57th St. Open Mondays.)

Short List—**ENRICO BAJ,** Marisa del Re, 41 E. 57th St. (through June 15); **DANIEL BARRETT,** ACA, 41 E. 57th St. (through June 22); **JEDD GARET,** Robert Miller, 41 E. 57th St. (through June 21); **WILLIAM GLACKENS,** Kraushaar, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. (through June 8); **FRANCES HYNES,** Dintenfass, 50 W. 57th St. (through June 21), and Kelly, 591 Broadway (through June 8); **GARY KUEHN,** Drake, 50 W. 57th St. (through June 8); **ARNALDO ROCHE RABELL,** Frumkin-Adams, 50 W. 57th St. (through June 4); **HUBERT SCHEIBEL,** Tilton, 24 W. 57th St. (through June 1); **HOLLY SEARS** and **BRUCE COHEN,** Ruth Siegel, 24 W. 57th St. (through June 1); **GEORGE SEGAL,** Janis, 110 W. 57th St. (open Mondays, through June 8); **MICHAEL TETHEROW,** McCoy, 41 E. 57th St. (through June 1); **ANNE TRUITT,** Emmerich, 41 E. 57th St. (through June 28); **MANOLO VALDES,** Marlborough, 40 W. 57th St. (open Mondays, through June 21).



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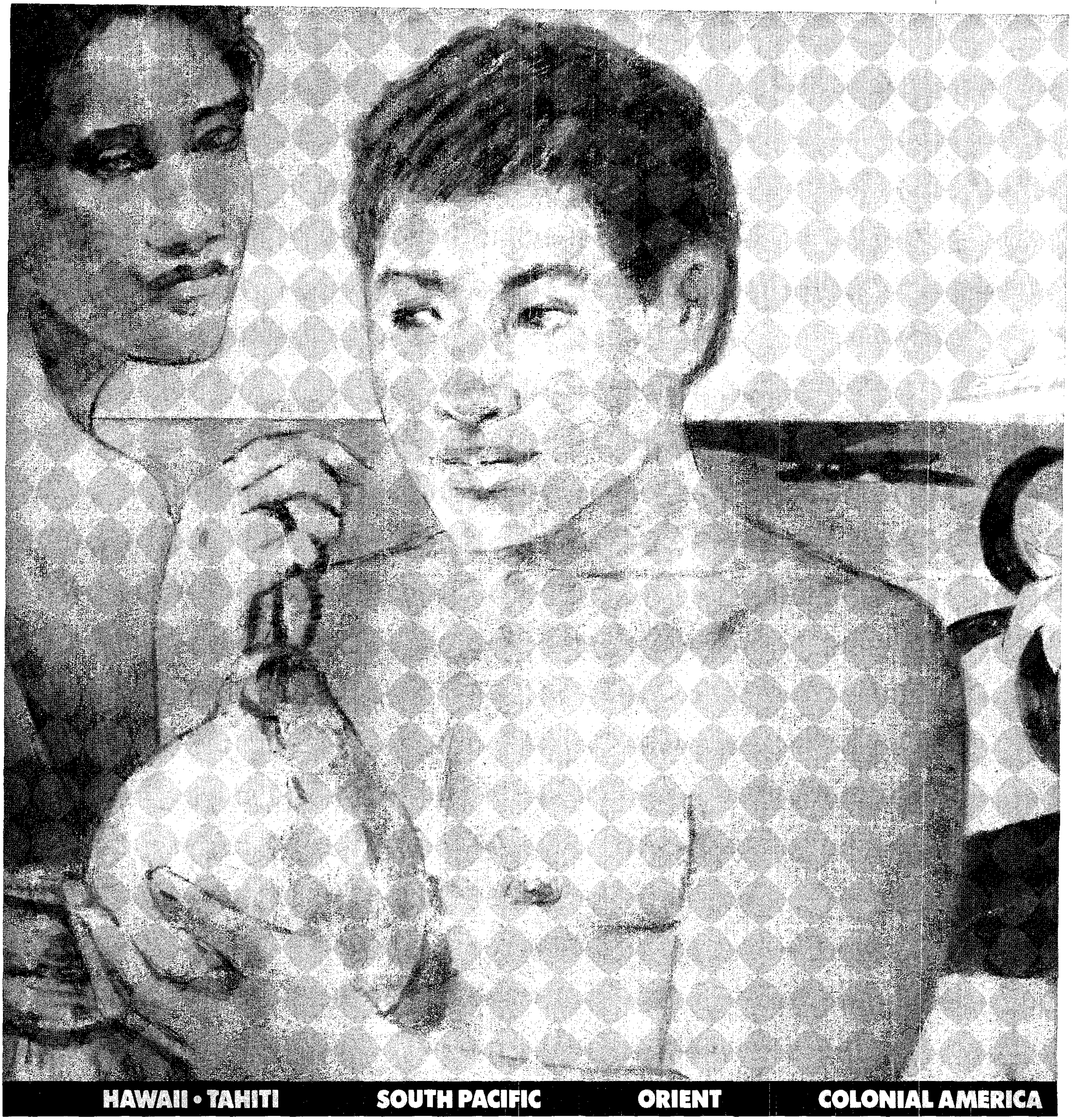

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EXOTIC ADVENTURES

GALLERIES—SoHo

Félix González-Torres—One of the strongest artists in the current Whitney Biennial, González-Torres examines issues of loss, mourning, cleansing, and regeneration in a most heartfelt way. This gallery exhibition has been changing each week during its monthlong run. The first installation was a series of closeup black-and-white photographs of a memorial nature: images of carved walls outside the American Museum of Natural History that list the ostensible attributes of Theodore Roosevelt—patriot, historian, ranchman, scientist, etc. The second installation consisted of a go-go stage and several performances. The third one included a series of white paintings entitled "Blood Works," and the fourth and present one consists of a carpet of silver-wrapped candies on the floor and phrases about personal loss on the walls. Through June 1. (Rosen, 130 Prince St.)

STARWALK

Six bronze plaques commemorating winners of the Antoinette Perry Award from 1947, the first year the Tonys (as they're more commonly known) were bestowed, have recently been embedded in the sidewalk in front of the Holiday Inn Crowne Plaza (1605 Broadway, at 49th Street). They remind alert pedestrians that Helen Hayes, Ingrid Bergman, José Ferrer, Patricia Neal, and David Wayne were cited that year for acting achievements and Elia Kazan was named for directing. According to Richard Basini, president of the Broadway Association, a community merchants' group involved in the project, the plaque idea dates back to the Lindsay administration but was no more than a proposal until Holiday Inn executives decided to be "good neighbors." The plaques, which have passed the Department of Traffic's "no-skid" test, are two feet square, weigh seventy pounds each, and are set into four-by-five-foot concrete blocks. Designed by the Executive Gift Source, in Wilton, Connecticut, and costing five thousand dollars each, they are replicas of the furrowed masks of comedy and tragedy that appear on the Tony medallion. Holiday Inn and the Portman Fund have provided monies for fourteen more plaques, which may be unveiled as early as September, and which will honor notable musical-comedy actresses. Mr. Basini hopes that by 1996 there will be some two hundred plaques on Broadway and surrounding side streets. "What we really want," he says, "is a Yellow Brick Road to the theatre district."

James Hyde—Although this artist has some interesting tricks up his sleeve, too often they're little more than clever sleights of hand. Several of these multi-panel works consist of lovely frescoes—including one of horizontal stripes, another of a delicate field of mottled deep green and fuchsia—that the artist intrudes upon with non-art materials, such as a bag of water or a heavy steel frame. In one painting a bar of concrete and a bar of cast glass are perched on a steel beam, perilously close to the edge. While these pieces are lively parables of painting, they sometimes veer too close to a contorted Constructivism. Through June 8. (Good, 532 Broadway.)

Alfred Leslie—Large charcoal drawings of a nude female model. Leslie uses a high-contrast, Caravaggioesque light and positions his model in odd reclining poses; then he draws her in such a way that she appears "righted." The effect is disorienting. So is the contrast between the deliberately manipulated poses and the woman's facial expressions, which are calm and self-commanding. The artist is a master of his medium, and he proves that realism is not necessarily *retardataire*, just excessively abused. Through June 29. (Flynn, 113 Crosby St.)

Sherrie Levine—For some time now, Levine has been taking on the conceptual giant of the twentieth century, Marcel Duchamp. She appropriates that master appropriator's forms, and neutralizes and reforms them through feminist discourse. She began with paintings of chessboards, continued with elegant glass sculptures of Duchamp's "Malic Molds," and continues further in this dramatic, intelligent, and beautiful show. The first room of the Boone gallery has been transformed into an artifactual display of a rarefied men's club, with four identical billiard tables lifted from a painting by Man Ray. The second room contains more specifically Duchampian works: a series of highly polished, identical bronze urinals that are a cross between Brancusis and baby shoes. Beyond that are a group of six monochrome oil paintings, each in a different Yves Klein color, called "Meltdowns." All the works here are, in a sense, meltdowns of art works—exquisitely crafted markers that titillate the desire for good painting and sculpture while also subverting it. Through June 29. (417 West Broadway.)

Thomas Locher—In this installation, Locher seems to be attempting a serious inquiry into the nature of representation in art and the meaning of existence, but the work is relatively inaccessible and airless. It consists of generic aluminum furniture—chair, tables, bed, wardrobe, cabinet, chest of drawers—painted with vaguely probing phrases: "Am I Exaggerating," "What Is Over There," "Am I Mistaken," "Do I Have to Question." There is also a separate series of large color photographs of doors arranged in aesthetic groupings. The doors are covered with several locks and bolts, each with its own index number of uncertain reference. These works are far more interesting; they have the aura of the absurd that eludes the sculptures. Through June 1. (Gorney, 100 Greene St.)

Richard Pettibone—This artist made a name for himself in the early sixties as one of the first practitioners of the art of the copy; interest in his work was revived in the mid-eighties. As a reminder of his earlier work, a gorgeous wall of miniature Frank Stella-style black pinstripe paintings is included here. But the main attraction is a series of paintings and Shaker benches of a somewhat more "original" nature, which have quotes from Ezra Pound either carved into or painted on them. Pettibone seems to take his Pound worship seriously; one painting reads, "Attention Serious Artists, Read The Serious Artist by Ezra Pound, Literary Essays, PP. 41-57, I'm Serious." The works are magnificently crafted, particularly the benches, but they suffer from a cloying Romanticism. No longer a clever copyist, Pettibone seems to have been born again, melding his own being and Pound's with the zeal of a recovering appropriationist. Through June 1. (Marcus, 568 Broadway. Open Wednesday evenings until 8.)

Ann Preston—This Biblical-scene installation, titled "Expulsion," recalls an ancient bath or burial chamber. It consists of a series of friezes in shallow relief that seem to offer a female counterpoint to the works of Tom Otterness. Like his friezes, Preston's are full of nimble doughboys and girls whose bodies often look like cartoonish sperm. The piece begins with a tree of breastlike olives and ends with a conga line enacting primitivistic rituals of aggression. Through June 1. (Toll, 146 Greene St.)

Ed Ruscha—A very strong show of work by one of our sliest social commentators. Still working in his late-eighties shadowed style, Ruscha has made ironic gothic paintings loaded with B-grade apocalyptic fire and brimstone. Each is presented as if it were from an old filmstrip—sprocket marks and all. The forms have been rendered with the artist's characteristic blurred edge, but certain gestures are apparent in the flecks of dirt and the stains that streak the faux-celluloid surfaces. These unexpected and beautiful little incidents—the evidence of a personal touch ordinarily absent from Ruscha's work—are, of course, disguised in the schmutz surrounding the paintings' foreboding cloud-filled skies. Not only do these works explore large issues but also, like good Hollywood movies, they are reducible to catchy phrases: Dramatic! Poignant! Ironic! Entertaining! Full of truth and grit! Will make you laugh and weep! Through June 1. (Castelli, 420 West Broadway.)

Sean Scherer / "Culture of Materials"—Faux-Constructivist paintings by a twenty-two-year-old artist. The works are executed with the care of homages, but are so overdone that they seem to be parodies, too. The larger ones are better, more Scherer's own. Through June 15. / One floor below is a modest display of small works by some of the original Constructivists, including an Ivan Kliun relief from 1916-17, a delightful tiny Ilya Chasnik drawing with thick collage elements, and a collaged assemblage by Yuri Annenkov. Through June 15. (Stux, 155 Spring St.)

Rudolf Stingel—For this exhibition the artist, who is primarily known for monochrome paintings made according to a standard recipe, has covered the floor with a plush orange wall-to-wall carpet. The work is very late seventies in spirit, harking back to a period when there was no star system to speak of and art was valued more for the ideas it examined and the assumptions it challenged than for its position within the hierarchy of the market. Both irony and optimism are evident here. Through June 15. (Newburg, 580 Broadway.)

Group Shows—At **plumb,** 81 Greene St.: "No Fanfare," a show of work by three artists who served in Vietnam. There is a wall of handsome Cubo-Expressionist drawings by David Hacker that are somewhat reminiscent of late Krasner; a concrete sculpture by Tom Bills that looks like a giant robot part; and two odd paintings by David Smith. Smith's works look slick and formalist, although they are loaded with combat imagery. The colorful stripes of one painting are derived from medallic ribbons; in the other, a camouflage pattern is surrounded by ant-size helicopters and by numbers that refer to Vietnam bombing missions, some of which the artist participated in. Through June 1. . . . **shafrazi,** 130 Prince St.: Although many of the seventeen artists in this exhibition are fairly well known, it has the feel of an old-fashioned new-talent show. All of the work is very aestheticized, some of it yawningly so, such as Lawrence Carroll's "Two Beds for Rauschenberg," which looks like a pair of battered mattresses and is nothing more than coattail opportunism. But there is also some strong painting, especially that of Stephen Ellis, David Row, Nicholas Rule, and Charles Clough; a giant spin-art canvas by the last of these, for example, is energetic and intelligent. Few galleries mount this kind of invitational group show anymore, and that's a shame. Through June 8.

Short List—**beverly buchanan,** Steinbaum, 132 Greene St. (through June 11); **kathe burkhart,** Feature, 484 Broome St. (through June 1); **gregory crane,** Thorp, 103 Prince St. (through June 15); **jane hammond,** Fiction-Nonfiction, 21 Mercer St. (through June 8); **robert lobe,** Blum Helman Warehouse, 80 Greene St. (through June 8); **david nyzio** and **vincent shine,** Postmasters, 80 Greene St. (through June 15); **deborah oropallo,** Germans van Eck, 420 West Broadway (through June 1); **mimmo paladino,** Sperone Westwater, 142 Greene St. (through June 10); **henry pearson,** Pearl, 420 West Broadway (through June 1); **randall schmit,** Donahue, 560 Broadway (through June 8); **peter schuyff,** Kasmin, 580 Broadway (through June 29); **claude simard,** Shainman, 560 Broadway (through June 29); **robert therrien,** 65 Thompson Street Gallery (through June 22); **william t. wiley,** Protetch, 560 Broadway (through June 1).

OTHER GALLERIES

Shigeko Kubota—A retrospective of video sculptures and concrete poems. The atmosphere pervading the two floors here—one lit low, the other brightly—suggests a metaphysical World's Fair. Among the many highlights are "Adam and Eve"—an astral pair revolving at different speeds, with wood limbs and monitor guts—and the blue-mirrored "Video Byobu III (Birds)," in which psychedelic avian patterns flicker across sixteen monitors. Through Sept. 15. (Museum of the Moving Image, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria. Open Tuesdays through Fridays, 12 to 4; Saturdays and Sundays, 12 to 6.)

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"Kulcher Queen and Kulcher Books"—An exhibition of more than forty books and magazines that Lita Hornick published through the Kulcher Press, including "Screen Tests," by Gerard Malanga and Andy Warhol, and "Interlocking Lives," by Alex Katz and Kenneth Koch. Through June 28. (Butler Library, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. Open Mondays through Fridays, 9 to 4:45.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

As Gulf War memorabilia pile up, we've been looking out for photographs that, owing to military censorship, might not have been seen while battles were going on. The newly released "Triumph in the Desert," published by Random House, is more like an official victory souvenir book than a photojournalistic record of the war; it's hardly a deep view of what went on in the Gulf. Subtitled "A Commemorative Photo History of the Gulf War," the book is full of images that are symbolic rather than revelatory, but while it veers toward the rah-rah, it isn't all so. The abstract-looking images of oil in flames, Technicolor nights, and skies marked by the traces of rockets are the ones that best differentiate this war from earlier wars. No doubt as time goes by other still images will surface to tell us something more personal than what we've been able to witness in photographs so far, but for now the most nuanced shot as far as this medium goes is an imaginary one, of a scene that a photographer friend described to us: a photojournalist sitting in front of a television set taking pictures off CNN.

El Lissitzky (1890-1941) / **Edward Quigley** *(1898-1977)—There's less consistent dynamism* here than you might expect from this protagonist of the Russian avant-garde, but his spirit of experimentation is present at every turn. The photos exemplify El Lissitzky's use of different creative forms—such as architecture, portraiture, print, collage, and photomontage. / This show, mostly of pictures from the thirties, offers a welcome chance to look at a large body of Quigley's work, but it's of interest more from a connoisseur's standpoint than as a display of something visionary. Through June 1. (Houk Friedman, 1094 Madison Ave., at 82nd St.)

"Mean Streets"—A small show of American street photography since the nineteen-forties. There are well-known works that exemplify the genre—images by Lisette Model, Robert Frank, Garry Winogrand, and Walker Evans—but there are also wonderful shots by lesser-known photographers. All of the pictures have a cinematic quality, and a gritty dynamic. Leon Levenstein's 1969 photograph of a man on Fifth Avenue is a powerful, growly portrait, and Todd Webb's long horizontal panel capturing a block on Sixth Avenue in 1948 is a fantastic display of street signs and street action. Through July 16. (Museum of Modern Art.)

Short List—**ALEXANDER ALLAND,** Museum of the City of New York, Fifth Ave. at 104th St. (open Wednesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 5; Sundays, 1 to 5; through Oct. 27); **JAMES CASEBERE,** Klein, 594 Broadway (through July 6); **EILEEN COWIN,** Baum, 588 Broadway (through June 15); **ALEXANDRA EDWARDS,** Danziger, 415 West Broadway (through June 8); **SALLY GALL,** Lieberman & Saul, 155 Spring St. (through June 15); **CRAIGIE HORSFIELD,** Gladstone, 99 Greene St. (through June 21); **LOUISE LAWLER,** Metro Pictures, 150 Greene St. (through June 22); **SEBASTIÃO SALGADO,** International Center of Photography, 1130 Fifth Ave., at 94th St. (open Tuesdays, noon to 8, with no admission charge after 5; Wednesdays through Fridays, noon to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6; through June 11).

MUSIC

There are times when we read poetry and can scarcely contain our excitement about the music that seems to lie within the verses, straining for expression. We feel we have a glimpse then of what a composer must experience as the imagination begins to quicken into song. And at these times we think the *Liederkreis*—the cycle of songs—is the Romantics' greatest invention and the richest adventure in all of music. It's limitless: a sequence of poems waiting eagerly for all the response a passionate mind can pour into them, waiting for the songwriter's craft to shape them into a more vivid image of themselves. To think of Schumann and Heine or Eichendorff, Wolf and Mörike, Poulenc and Apollinaire, or Debussy and Verlaine is sheer intoxication. And in this group we include Benjamin Britten coming upon Blake or Donne or the exquisitely selected anthology (Cotton, Tennyson, Jonson, Blake, Keats, and a fifteenth-century dirge) that makes up his "Serenade for Tenor, Horn, and Strings." Surely no cycle of songs surpasses the "Serenade" for lyrical generosity and technical poise, for variety of invention and rapt immersion in shifting moods. The piece has been a classic for us since we first heard it, and we think of it as a repertory staple, but in fact performances in New York are relatively scarce. We would like to hear all the good English-speaking tenors try it. (A good many have done so on records, as have some special foreigners like Peter Schreier and Ivan Kozlovsky.) So we are delighted to see that Vinson Cole will be performing the "Serenade" with the New York Chamber Symphony at the 92nd Street Y, and we would love to hear the work become a calling card for his colleagues and competitors in their orchestral visits here.

(The box-office number for Avery Fisher Hall is 874-2424; for Alice Tully Hall 362-1911; for Carnegie Hall 247-7800; and for Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St., 362-8719.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

New York Philharmonic—At Avery Fisher Hall. May 28 at 8: In the last concert of his thirteen-year tenure as the orchestra's music director, Zubin Mehta conducts Schoenberg's "Gurrelieder." With soprano Susan Dunn, mezzo-soprano Florence Quivar, tenors Jon Garrison and Gary Lakes, bass John Cheek, narrator Hans Hotter, and the New York Choral Artists. . . . ¶ June 4 at 7:30: André Previn conducts Berlioz's overture "Le Corsaire" and two symphonies (Brahms' Fourth and Dutilleux's Second).

I Cameristi Lombardi—Mario Conter conducts the Brescia-based chamber orchestra in its first American appearances. A concert of Italian Baroque music by Biagio Marini, Alessandro Scarlatti, Vivaldi, and Locatelli. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 415-5440. May 30 at 8.) . . . ¶ Concertos by Vivaldi, a sonata by Albinoni, a divertimento by Mozart, and Respighi's third suite of "Ancient Airs and Dances." (Weill Recital Hall, at Carnegie Hall. June 3 at 8.)

New York Chamber Symphony—Yoav Talmi conducts Mozart's "Haffner" Symphony and Dvořák's "Czech Suite"; Joshua Bell is the soloist in Vieuxtemps' Fifth Violin Concerto; and tenor Vinson Cole and hornist Paul Ingraham are featured in Britten's "Serenade for Tenor, Horn, and Strings." (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 415-5440. June 1 at 8 and June 2 at 3.)

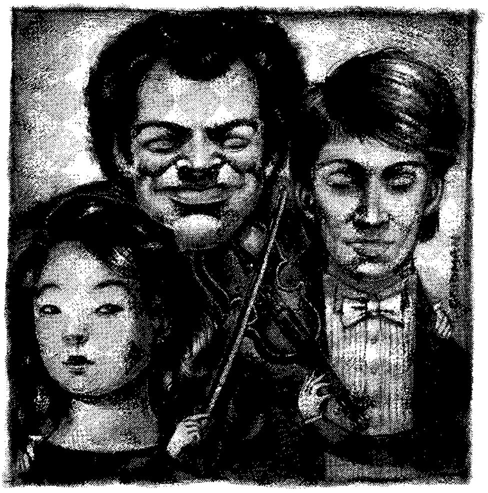
New York Youth Symphony—Samuel Wong leads the orchestra in Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, Glinka's "Russlan and Ludmilla" Overture, Saint-Saëns' First Cello Concerto (with twelve-year-old soloist Moon-Sun Kang), and a new work by Augusta Read Thomas. (Carnegie Hall. June 2 at 3. For information about free tickets, call 247-7800.)

Orchestra of St. Luke's—Paul Lustig Dunkel conducts a concert of music by Julius Burger, including premières of his "Symphonic Scherzo for String Orchestra," "Zigeunerlied for Violin and Orchestra" (with soloist Sergiu Schwartz), Cello Concerto (with soloist Maya Beiser), and "Eastern Symphony." (Alice Tully Hall. June 3 at 8.)

Metropolitan Greek Chorale—George Tsontakis directs a program that ranges from the première of a work for chorus and orchestra by Theodore Antoniou to Greek demotic and folk songs. (Merkin Concert Hall. June 2 at 3.)

I Cantori di New York—Eric Milnes directs the choir, soloists, and a period-instrument orchestra in music by Bach: two motets and the Cantata No. 4 ("Christ lag in Todesbanden"). (Merkin Concert Hall. June 2 at 7.)

Goodman Chamber Choir—Through its Adopt-an-Émigré program, the choir has established itself as a conduit for professional Soviet choristers beginning new lives in the West. Andrea Goodman directs a benefit concert that, like her choir, brings together Russian and American artistry. Included are works by Mussorgsky, Tchaikovsky, Rachmaninoff, Carter, and Michael Hennagin. (Merkin Concert Hall. June 4 at 8.)



Alyssa Park at Alice Tully Hall,
Itzhak Perlman at Avery Fisher Hall, and
Joshua Bell at the 92nd Street Y

RECITALS

Sachiko Hasegawa—The pianist performs works by Domenico Scarlatti, Schumann, Liszt, Bartók, and Takemitsu. (Merkin Concert Hall. May 29 at 8.)

Allison Brewster—The pianist, who has often appeared in this city as a "collaborative artist," performs solo works by Clementi, Liszt, Ravel, and Corigliano in her New York recital début. Eugene Moye joins her for Rachmaninoff's Cello Sonata, and tenor Robert White is featured in songs by nineteenth-century New England composers. (Merkin Concert Hall. May 28 at 8.)

New York Philharmonic Ensembles—Players from the orchestra perform Mozart's C-Minor String Quintet and Quintet in E-Flat for Piano and Winds. (Winter Garden, World Financial Center, Battery Park City. May 29 at 7:30. No tickets necessary.)

William Matthews—Classical guitarist, presenting a twentieth-century program that includes works written for him by Sebastian Currier and Frederic Hand. (Weill Recital Hall. May 29 at 8.)

John Kamitsuka—Piano, performing works by Bach, Beethoven, Liszt, and Rachmaninoff, as well as the première of a work by Miriam Gideon. (Alice Tully Hall. May 29 at 8.)

Bargemusic—Presenting a trio by Beethoven, a quartet by Mozart, and a quintet by Franck. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 1-718 624-4061. May 30 at 7:30 and June 2 at 4.)

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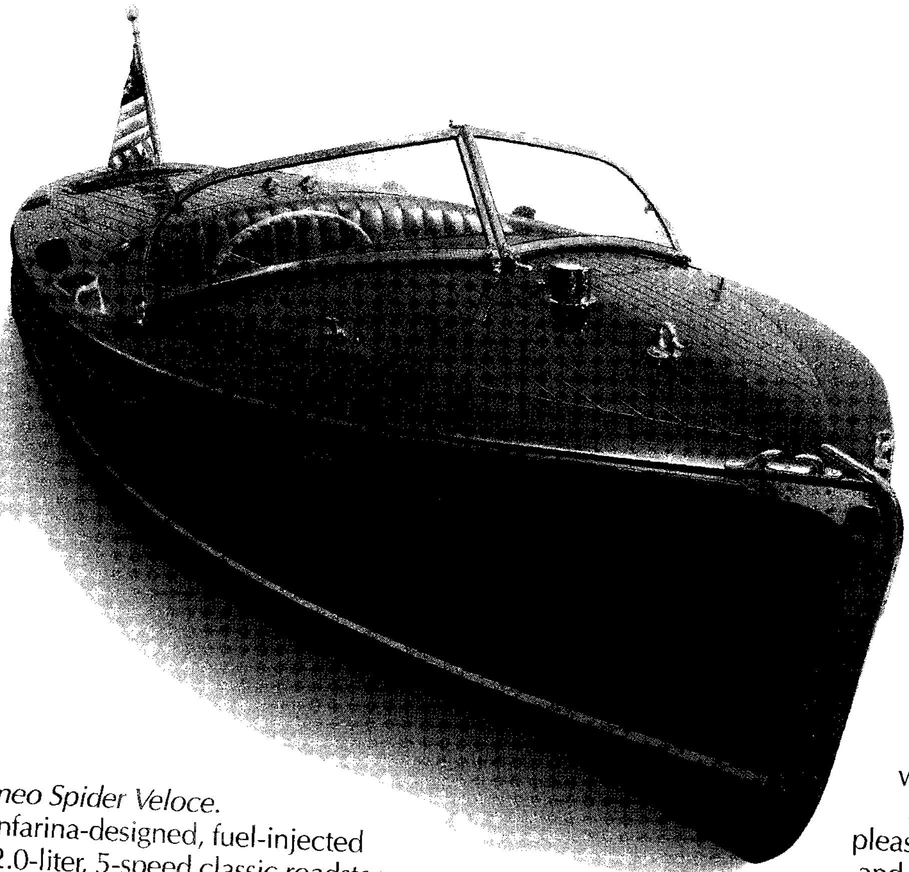

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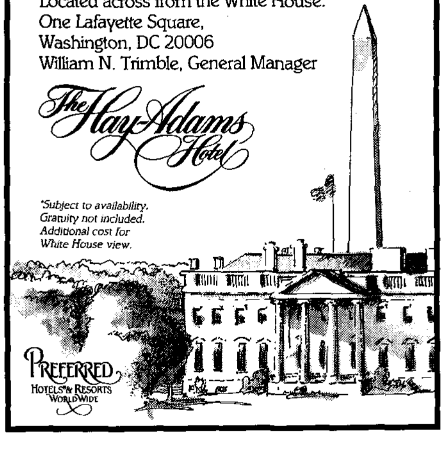


MUSIC–Cont'd

ANDRÉ WATTS AND FRIENDS—Chamber music by Mozart is performed by the pianist and a half dozen colleagues: hornist David Jolley, bassoonist Judith Le Clair, violist Paul Neubauer, oboist John Perillo, pianist Georg Schenck, and clarinettist David Shifrin. (Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 570-3949. May 30 at 8.)

ANTOINE ZEMOR—Pianist, performing solo works by Bach and Chopin, and (with the assistance of David Buechner) Mozart's D-Major Sonata for Two Pianos and Milhaud's "Scaramouche" Suite. (Greenwich House Music School, 46 Barrow St. May 30 at 8. Admission by contribution.)

ALYSSA PARK—The violinist, who was awarded the bronze medal at the 1990 International Tchaikovsky Competition, performs works by Leclair, Prokofiev, David Diamond (the première of his "Concert Piece"), and, appropriately, Tchaikovsky, in her New York recital début. With pianist Rohan De Silva. (Alice Tully Hall. May 31 at 8.)

NEW YORK CAMERATA—Presenting chamber music by Louis-Gabriel Guillemain, Mozart, Martinů, Carter (his "Enchanted Preludes"), and Rorem (his "Last Poems of Wallace Stevens," featuring soprano Eleanor Clark). (St. John's in the Village, 218 W. 11th St., at Waverly Pl. June 1 at 8. Admission by contribution.)

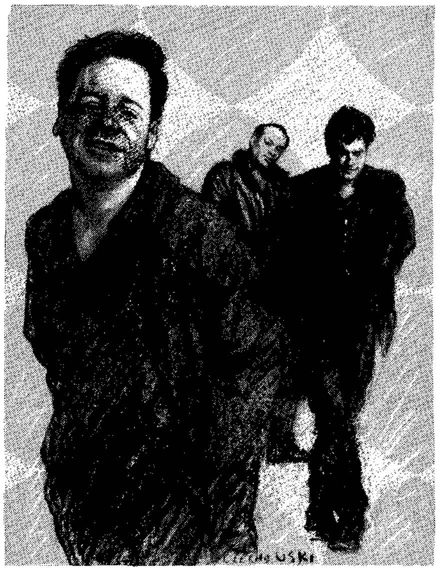
ITZHAK PERLMAN AND DANIEL BARENBOIM—The violinist and the pianist perform ten Mozart sonatas, spread over two concerts. (Avery Fisher Hall. June 2 at 7:30 and June 3 at 8.)

ELIE SIEGMEISTER—When this New York City-born composer died in March, at the age of eighty-two, he left behind an admiring public and a large corpus of musical works. His music covered a wide terrain, ranging from the early dissonance of "The Strange Funeral in Braddock" (for tenor and piano) to the blues-inspired Clarinet Concerto, the folk derived opera "The Plough and the Stars," and celebrations of America in general and of his native city in particular (such as the piano solo "Sunday in Brooklyn"). Eleven musicians (soprano Elizabeth Kirkpatrick, clarinettist Stanley Drucker, and pianist Alan Mandel among them) perform these and other pieces in a celebration of Siegmeister's life and work. (Ethical Culture Society, 2 W. 64th St. June 3 at 8. No tickets necessary.)

PAULO SANTIAGO—In his New York début, the Portuguese pianist performs music by Schumann, Chopin, and Debussy. (Weill Recital Hall. June 4 at 8.)

MICHAEL DASH—Baritone, in his New York recital début, performing songs, scenas, and arias by Mozart, Beethoven, Brahms, and Verdi, as well as recent works by Edward Barnes and Chris DeBlasio. With pianist Paul Suits. (Weill Recital Hall. June 5 at 8.)

JAZZ/POP/ROCK PERSONAL APPEARANCES


Simple Minds

SIMPLE MINDS—This is their first American tour in five years, and the singer-songwriter Jim Kerr and his band seem poised and ready to conquer America. In England, their last five albums have hit No. 1, but they've had only spotty success here. All that may change with the group's new album, "Real Life"—here the group's big, organic sound (much like U2's) is built around some solid, catchy choruses. And the single "See the Lights," with its church bells and gospel harmonies, is a beautiful piece of cathedral rock. Not nearly as pompous as they used to be, Simple Minds play with statesmanlike authority. (Beacon Theatre, Broadway at 74th St. May 30 at 8. For tickets, call 496-7070.)

"POSITIVELY PORTER!"—Two concerts in tribute to Cole, with Richard Rodney Bennett, Barbara Lea, Billy Stritch, Marlene VerPlanck, and many others. (St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. 935-2200. May 28 and June 4 at 8.)

FRANK GORDON QUARTET—Alternative Museum, 17 White St. 966-4444. May 29 at 8.

BIG APPLE CHORUS—A program of barbershop harmony music. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. June 1 at 8.)

STYX—Beacon Theatre. June 4-5 at 8.

IMPROVISATIONS FESTIVAL—May 31 at 8: David Lopato & Sunda Swing, Kit Young, Hassan Hakmoun & Zahar, and Mbira & Shekere Sound Experience. . . . ¶ June 1 at 8: Bobby Bradford, James Newton, Craig Harris & Tailgater's Tales, and Richard Horowitz. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400.)

SPORTS

HOME TEAMS

METS—Away until June 11, when they face the Atlanta Braves.

YANKEES—Vs. the Boston Red Sox, May 27 at 1, and May 28-29 at 7:30. . . . ¶ Vs. the Milwaukee Brewers, May 31 at 7:30, and June 1-2 at 1:30. . . . ¶ Vs. the Toronto Blue Jays, June 3-5 at 7:30.

(The Mets play at Shea Stadium, 1-718 507-8499, and the Yankees play at Yankee Stadium, 293-6000.)

RACING

HORSES—At Belmont: Daily, except Tuesdays, at 1. . . . **TROTTING** at Yonkers Raceway: Weeknights at 8, and Tuesdays at 1. . . . At the Meadowlands: Weeknights at 7:30. . . . At Saratoga Raceway, Saratoga Springs: Wednesdays through Saturdays at 7:45.

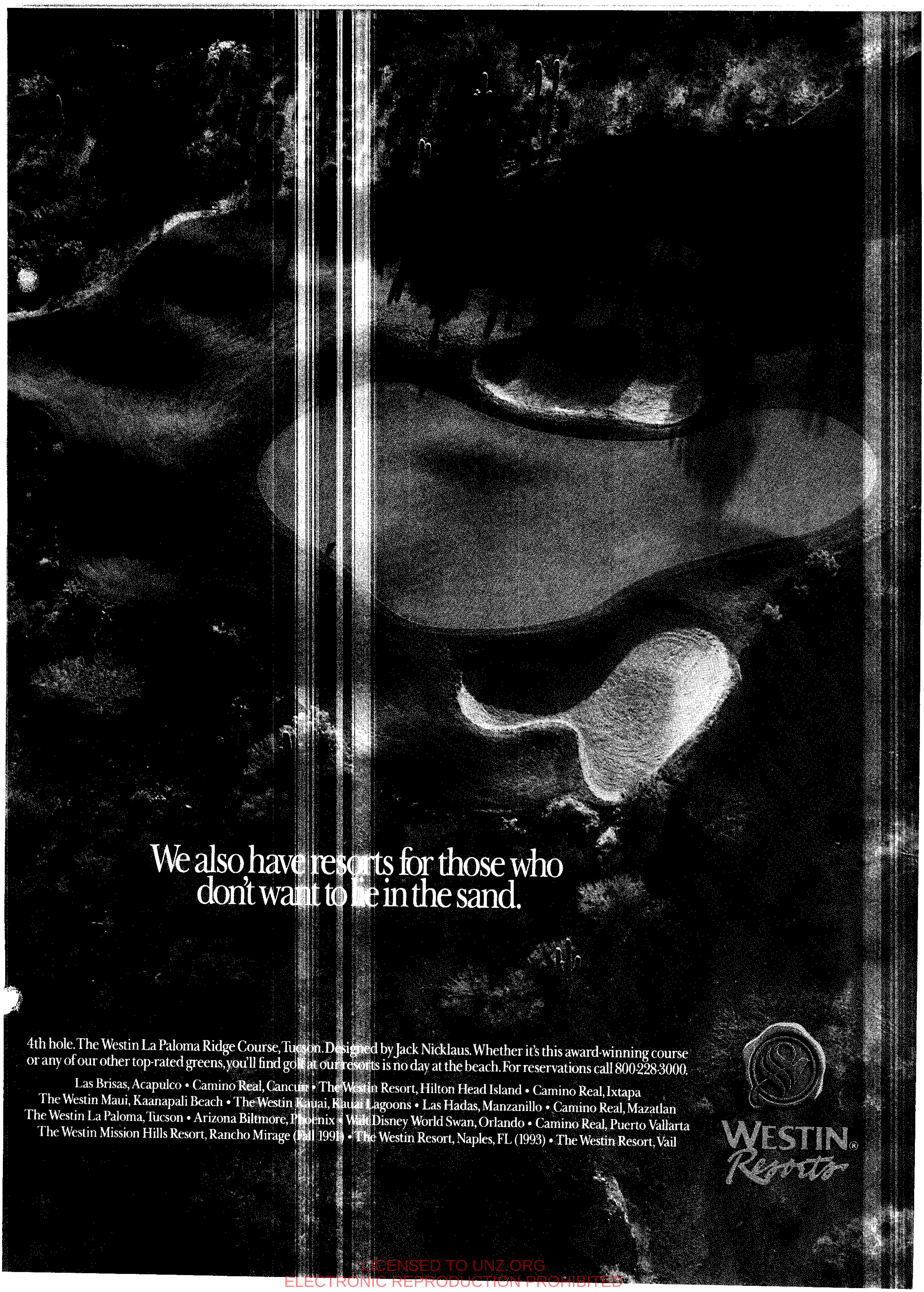
ABOVE AND BEYOND

SHIMANE—Representatives from this region in Japan, which is known for its nature preserves, are here for five days (June 2-6) to show off their performing arts. Performances include "Iwami Kagura (The Drama of the Eight-Headed Serpent)," the "lion dance," concerts by an orchestra of percussion instruments, and comic folk songs and pantomimes. For a full schedule of events and venues, call 337-3660.

GRAVEYARD TOUR—The New York Irish History Roundtable is presenting a tour of the Holy Cross Cemetery, in Brooklyn, on June 2 starting at 11:30 A.M. The graves of famous and infamous Irish-Americans (W. R. Grace, Diamond Jim Brady, Captain Paul Boyton) are landmarks along the way. For reservations, call 1-718 595-4184.

READINGS AND TALKS—May 30 at 7: Ruby Dee reads from "Tower to Heaven." (Brentano's, Fifth Ave. at 48th St. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ June 4 at 6: Julia Alvarez and Sandra Cisneros read from their own works. (Donnell Library Auditorium, 20 W. 53rd St. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ June 4 at 7: Robert B. Oxnam, president of the Asia Society, interviews the writer Bharati Mukherjee. (Asia Society, Park Ave. at 70th St. 517-2742.) . . . ¶ June 4 at 7:30: Charles Wright reads from his own poetry. (Dia Center for the Arts, 155 Mercer St. Tickets at the door on the night of the reading) . . . ¶ June 5 at 8:15: Molly Peacock and Nicholas Christopher read from their own poetry. (Barnard Hall, Barnard College, Broadway at 117th St. No tickets necessary.)

MEMORANDA—A celebration of Czechoslovakia culture will be held at Symphony Space on June 2 at 7. (Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400.) . . . ¶ The New York Botanical Garden is holding its annual Forest Weekend June 1-2. Good for a walk in the woods.



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FILMS ACCOMPANIED BY A DAGGER ARE DESCRIBED IN THE "IN BRIEF" SECTION, STARTING ON PAGE 26.

"Bananas" (playing June 2 at Theatre 80 St. Marks) refers to the chief cash crop of San Marcos, a banana dictatorship. The title also signals the first time that Woody Allen went completely bananas as a director and star. Twenty years after its release, "Bananas" (written by Allen and Mickey Rose) remains his most uproarious movie. This anything-goes farce sums up the late sixties/early seventies—sexual liberation and the self-consciousness accompanying it, quasi-paranoid political awareness, an exploding collegiate culture that turned names like Kierkegaard into conversational gambits.

Allen's character, Fielding Mellish, who dropped out of college after a few days, is working as a products tester when he falls into an affair with Nancy, a social activist (Louise Lasser). She's more fired up about a rebellion in San Marcos than about Fielding. She's not ready "to give or to receive" (not with him, anyway); she feels "there's something missing." The story comes full circle—or at least full curlicue—when Fielding goes to San Marcos, ends up becoming its revolutionary leader, and, in that guise, wins Nancy's heart and mind. When it comes to the meeting of bodies, there's still "something missing."

Allen now dismisses the film. He says it "trades on what Noël Coward called the talent to amuse." What better talent should a comic artist exercise? Allen was more connected to the culture when spinning laughs than he is when plumbing for profundity. The humor in "Bananas" has an enduring, grungy charm. It hasn't dated; at times it's even prescient. The opening bit of Howard Cosell doing color on a coup d'état for "Wide World of Sports" could be re-staged today with Peter Arnett.

EAST SIDE

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St. (995-2000)
Theatre 1: "Poison" (directed by Todd Haynes).
Theatre 2: "The Comfort of Strangers" (†).
Theatre 3: "La Femme Nikita" (†).
Theatre 4: "The Ballad of the Sad Café" (†).
Theatre 5: "Drowning by Numbers" (Peter Greenaway).
Theatre 6: "Tatie Danielle" (Etienne Chatiliez, in French), with Tsilla Chelton.

Public Theatre, 425 Lafayette St. (598-7171)
"Gun Crazy" (1949, Joseph H. Lewis), with Peggy Cumming and John Dall; and "Terror in a Texas Town" (1958, Lewis), with Sterling Hayden and Sebastian Cabot.

Movieland 8th Street Triplex, 36 E. 8th. (477-6600)
Theatre 1: "Hudson Hawk" (Michael Lehmann), with Bruce Willis, Danny Aiello, Andie MacDowell, Sandra Bernhard, Richard E. Grant, James Coburn, and Donald Burton.
Theatre 2: (Separate admissions) "Out for Justice" (John Flynn), with Steven Seagal; and "Mannequin Two: On the Move" (Stewart Raffill).
Theatre 3: "FX2—The Deadly Art of Illusion" (†).

Loews Village Theatre VII, 3rd Ave. at 11th. (982-0400)
Theatre 1: "Thelma & Louise" (†).
Theatre 2: "Drop Dead Fred" (Ate de Jong), with Phoebe Cates, Rik Mayall, Marsha Mason, Tim Matheson, and Carrie Fisher.
Theatre 3: "Citizen Kane" (†).
Theatre 4: "Wild Hearts Can't Be Broken" (Steve Miner), with Gabrielle Anwar and Michael Schoeffling.
Theatre 5: "Truth or Dare" (Alek Keshishian), with Madonna.
Theatre 6: "An Angel at My Table" (†).
Theatre 7: "Thelma & Louise" (†).

Cinema Village 12th Street, 22 E. 12th. (924-3363)
"Eating" (†).

Village East Cinemas, 2nd Ave. at 12th. (529-6799)
Theatre 1: "A Woman Under the Influence" (1974, John Cassavetes).
Theatre 2: "Dances with Wolves" (†).
Theatre 3: "Straight Out of Brooklyn" (Matty Rich).
Theatre 4: "Switch" (†).
Theatre 5: "What About Bob?" (Frank Oz), with Bill Murray and Richard Dreyfuss.
Theatre 6: "The Object of Beauty" (†).
Theatre 7: "The Imported Bridegroom."

Cinema Village 3rd Avenue, between 12th and 13th. (505-7320)
"Noir et Blanc" (Claire Devers).

Loews 19th Street East 6, B'way at 19th. (260-8000)
Theatre 1: "Hangin' with the Homeboys" (Joseph Vasquez).
Theatre 2: "Toy Soldiers" (†).
Theatre 3: "FX2—The Deadly Art of Illusion" (†).
Theatre 4: "Hudson Hawk" (Michael Lehmann), with Bruce Willis, Danny Aiello, Andie MacDowell, Sandra Bernhard, Richard E. Grant, James Coburn, and Donald Burton.
Theatre 5: Through May 30: "A Rage in Harlem" (†). From May 31: "Soapdish" (Michael Hoffman), with Sally Field, Kevin Kline, Robert Downey, Jr., Whoopi Goldberg, Cathy Moriarty, and Elisabeth Shue.
Theatre 6: "The Silence of the Lambs" (†).

Gramercy, Lexington at 23rd. (475-1660)
"Wild Hearts Can't Be Broken" (Steve Miner), with Gabrielle Anwar and Michael Schoeffling.

Bay Cinema, 2nd Ave. at 32nd. (679-0160)
"Only the Lonely" (Chris Columbus), with John Candy.

Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th. (689-6548)
Theatre 1: "What About Bob?" (Frank Oz), with Bill Murray and Richard Dreyfuss.
Theatre 2: Through May 30: "The Object of Beauty" (†). From May 31: "Ambition" (Scott D. Goldstein), with Lou Diamond Phillips and Clancy Brown.
Theatre 3: "Switch" (†).
Theatre 4: "Truth or Dare" (Alek Keshishian), with Madonna.

Loews 34th Street Showplace, 238 E. 34th. (532-5544)
Theatre 1: Through May 29: "Stone Cold" (Craig R. Baxley), with Brian Bosworth. May 30: Theatre closed. From May 31: "Soapdish" (Michael Hoffman), with Sally Field, Kevin Kline, Robert Downey, Jr., Whoopi Goldberg, Cathy Moriarty, and Elisabeth Shue.
Theatre 2: "FX2—The Deadly Art of Illusion" (†).
Theatre 3: "Thelma & Louise" (†).

34th St. East, 241 E. 34th. (683-0255)
"Backdraft" (Ron Howard), with Kurt Russell, William Baldwin, Scott Glenn, Jennifer Jason Leigh, Rebecca DeMornay, Donald Sutherland, and Robert De Niro.

Eastside Cinema, 3rd Ave. at 55th. (755-3020)
Through May 30: "Dances with Wolves" (†). From May 31: "Truth or Dare" (Alek Keshishian), with Madonna.

Sutton 1 and 2, 3rd Ave. at 57th. (759-1411)
Theatre 1: Through May 30: "Wild Hearts Can't Be Broken" (Steve Miner), with Gabrielle Anwar and Michael Schoeffling. From May 31: "Ambition" (Scott D. Goldstein), with Lou Diamond Phillips and Clancy Brown.
Theatre 2: "Switch" (†).

Gotham Cinema, 3rd Ave. at 58th. (759-2262)
"Mannequin Two: On the Move" (Stewart Raffill).

Plaza, 42 E. 58th. (355-3320)
"Straight Out of Brooklyn" (Matty Rich).

Manhattan Twin, 3rd Ave. at 59th. (935-6420)
Theatre 1: "Stone Cold" (Craig R. Baxley), with Brian Bosworth.
Theatre 2: "FX2—The Deadly Art of Illusion" (†).

59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th. (759-4630)
"Impromptu" (†).

Baronet and Coronet, 3rd Ave. at 59th. (355-1663)
Theatre 1: "Backdraft" (Ron Howard), with Kurt Russell, William Baldwin, Scott Glenn, Jennifer Jason Leigh, Rebecca DeMornay, Donald Sutherland, and Robert De Niro.
Theatre 2: "Backdraft."

Cinema I, Cinema II, and Cinema 3rd Avenue, 3rd Ave. at 60th. (753-6022)
Theatre 1: "What About Bob?" (Frank Oz), with Bill Murray and Richard Dreyfuss.
Theatre 2: "Opening Night" (1977, John Cassavetes), with Gena Rowlands, Ben Gazzara, Joan Blondell, and Cassavetes.
Theatre 3: Through May 30: "Defending Your Life" (†). From May 31: "Love Without Pity" (Eric Rochant, in French), with Hippolyte Girardot and Mireille Perrier.

Gemini 1 and 2, 2nd Ave. at 64th. (832-1670)
Theatre 1: "Drop Dead Fred" (Ate de Jong), with Phoebe Cates, Rik Mayall, Marsha Mason, Tim Matheson, and Carrie Fisher.
Theatre 2: "Hudson Hawk" (Michael Lehmann), with Bruce Willis, Danny Aiello, Andie MacDowell, Sandra Bernhard, Richard E. Grant, James Coburn, and Donald Burton.

Beekman, 2nd Ave. at 66th. (737-2622)
"Only the Lonely" (Chris Columbus), with John Candy, Maureen O'Hara, Ally Sheedy, Kevin Dunn, Milo O'Shea, Bert Remsen, Anthony Quinn, and James Belushi.

Loews New York Twin, 2nd Ave. at 67th. (744-7339)
Theatre 1: "Thelma & Louise" (†).
Theatre 2: Through May 30: "Hangin' with the Homeboys" (Joseph Vasquez). From May 31: "Soapdish" (Michael Hoffman), with Sally Field, Kevin Kline, Robert Downey, Jr., Whoopi Goldberg, Cathy Moriarty, and Elisabeth Shue.

68th St. Playhouse, 3rd Ave. at 68th. (734-0302)
"Strangers in Good Company" (Cynthia Scott).

Loews Tower East, 3rd Ave. at 71st. (879-1313)
"Truth or Dare" (Alek Keshishian), with Madonna.

U. A. East, 1st Ave. at 85th. (249-5100)
"Hudson Hawk" (Michael Lehmann), with Bruce Willis, Danny Aiello, Andie MacDowell, Sandra Bernhard, Richard E. Grant, James Coburn, and Donald Burton.

Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th. (534-1880)
Theatre 1: "Stone Cold" (Craig R. Baxley), with Brian Bosworth.
Theatre 2: "Backdraft" (Ron Howard), with Kurt Russell and William Baldwin.

86th Street East Twin, 3rd Ave. at 86th. (249-1144)
Theatre 1: "Switch" (†).
Theatre 2: "What About Bob?" (Frank Oz), with Bill Murray and Richard Dreyfuss.

WEST SIDE

Film Forum, 209 W. Houston St. (727-8110)
Theatre 1: Through June 4: "The Wonderful World of Dogs" (directed by Mark Lewis) and "A Little Vicious" (Immy Humes). From June 5: "Begotten" (1989, E. Elias Merhige).
Theatre 2: See listings under Revival Houses.
Theatre 3: "Paris Is Burning" (†).

Bleecker Movie House, 144 Bleecker St. (807-9205)

Theatre 1: (Separate admissions) "The Vanishing" (†); and "Blonde Emmanuelle."

Theatre 2: (Separate admissions) "Herdsmen of the Sun" (1988, Werner Herzog); and "Les Maitres Fou" (Jean Rouch).

Waverly 1 and 2, 6th Ave. at 3rd. (929-8037)

Theatre 1: "Backdraft" (Ron Howard), with Kurt Russell, William Baldwin, Scott Glenn, Jennifer Jason Leigh, Rebecca DeMornay, and Robert De Niro.

Theatre 2: "Stone Cold" (Craig R. Baxley), with Brian Bosworth.

8th St. Playhouse, 52 W. 8th. (674-6515)

Through May 30: "A Rage in Harlem" (†).

From May 31: "Ambition" (Scott D. Goldstein), with Lou Diamond Phillips and Clancy Brown.

Art Greenwich Twin, Greenwich Ave. at 12th. (929-3350)

Theatre 1: Through May 30: "Only the Lonely" (Chris Columbus), with John Candy, Maureen O'Hara, Ally Sheedy, Kevin Dunn, Milo O'Shea, Bert Remsen, Anthony Quinn, and James Belushi. From May 31: "Soapdish" (Michael Hoffman), with Sally Field, Kevin Kline, Robert Downey, Jr., Whoopi Goldberg, Cathy Moriarty, and Elisabeth Shue.

Theatre 2: "Impromptu" (†).

Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th. (255-8800)

Theatre 1: "Defending Your Life" (†).

Theatre 2: "Daddy Nostalgia" (Bertrand Tavernier; in English and French), with Dirk Bogarde and Jane Birkin.

Theatre 3: "Alice" (†).

Theatre 4: "Journey of Hope" (†).

Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd. (691-4744)

Theatre 1: "A Kiss Before Dying" (†).

Theatre 2: "Truth or Dare" (Alek Keshishian), with Madonna.

Theatre 3: "Switch" (†).

Theatre 4: "Drop Dead Fred" (Ate de Jong), with Phoebe Cates, Rik Mayall, Marsha Mason, Tim Matheson, and Carrie Fisher.

Theatre 5: "Truth or Dare."

Theatre 6: "Only the Lonely" (Chris Columbus), with John Candy.

Theatre 7: "Impromptu" (†).

Theatre 8: "Backdraft" (Ron Howard), with Kurt Russell, William Baldwin, Scott Glenn, Jennifer Jason Leigh, Rebecca DeMornay, Donald Sutherland, and Robert De Niro.

Theatre 9: "Backdraft."

23rd St. West Triplex, 333 W. 23rd. (989-0060)

Theatre 1: "Mortal Thoughts" (Alan Rudolph), with Demi Moore and Glenne Headly.

Theatre 2: (Separate admissions) "Mannequin Two: On the Move" (Stewart Raffill); and "Stone Cold" (Craig R. Baxley), with Brian Bosworth.

Theatre 3: "What About Bob?" (Frank Oz), with Bill Murray and Richard Dreyfuss.

Guild, 33 W. 50th. (757-2406)

"Thelma & Louise" (†).

Worldwide Cinemas, 50th St. between 8th and 9th Aves. (246-1583)

Theatre 1: "Truly, Madly, Deeply" (†).

Theatre 2: "The Object of Beauty" (†).

Theatre 3: "Mortal Thoughts" (Alan Rudolph), with Demi Moore and Glenne Headly.

Theatre 4: "Drowning by Numbers" (Peter Greenaway).

Theatre 5: "Spartacus" (†).

Theatre 6: "Impromptu" (†).

Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th. (765-7600)

"Backdraft" (Ron Howard), with Kurt Russell, William Baldwin, Scott Glenn, Jennifer Jason Leigh, Rebecca DeMornay, Donald Sutherland, and Robert De Niro.

Loews Festival, 6 W. 57th. (307-7856)

"Citizen Kane" (†).

57th St. Playhouse, 110 W. 57th. (581-7360)

"Daddy Nostalgia" (Bertrand Tavernier; in English and French), with Dirk Bogarde and Jane Birkin.

Carnegie Hall Cinemas, 7th Ave. between 56th and 57th. (265-2520)

Theatre 1: "Tatie Danielle" (Etienne Chatiliez, in French), with Tsilla Chelton.

Theatre 2: "La Femme Nikita" (†).

Loews Fine Arts, 4 W. 58th. (980-5656)

"An Angel at My Table" (†).

Cinema 3, 2 W. 59th. (752-5959)

"Truly, Madly, Deeply" (†).

Loews Paramount, B'way at 61st. (247-5070)

Through May 29: "Defending Your Life" (†).

May 30: Theatre closed.

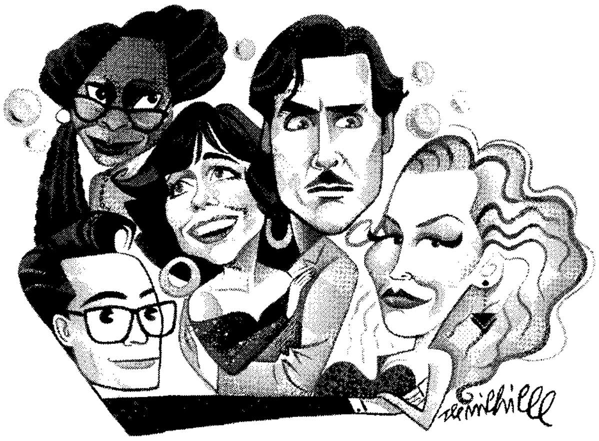
From May 31: "Soapdish" (Michael Hoffman), with Sally Field, Kevin Kline, Robert Downey, Jr., Whoopi Goldberg, Cathy Moriarty, and Elisabeth Shue.

62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd. (265-7466)

"Only the Lonely" (Chris Columbus), with John Candy, Maureen O'Hara, Ally Sheedy, Kevin Dunn, Milo O'Shea, Bert Remsen, Anthony Quinn, and James Belushi.

Lincoln Plaza 1, 2, and 3, B'way at 63rd. (757-2280)

Theatre 1: Through May 30: "The Nasty Girl" (Michael Verhoeven, in German), with Lena Stolze. From May 31: "Everybody's Fine" (Giuseppe Tornatore, in Italian), with Marcello Mastroianni.



Robert Downey, Jr., Whoopi Goldberg, Sally Field, Kevin Kline, and Cathy Moriarty in "Soapdish"

Theatre 2: Through May 30: "Cyrano de Bergerac" (Jean-Paul Rappeneau, in French), with Gérard Depardieu. From May 31: "Everybody's Fine."

Theatre 3: "Ju Dou" (†).

Regency, B'way at 67th. (724-3700)

"Drop Dead Fred" (Ate de Jong), with Phoebe Cates, Rik Mayall, Marsha Mason, Tim Matheson, and Carrie Fisher.

Loews 84th Street Sixplex, B'way at 84th. (877-3600)

Theatre 1: "Truth or Dare" (Alek Keshishian), with Madonna.

Theatre 2: "Hudson Hawk" (Michael Lehmann), with Bruce Willis, Danny Aiello, Andie MacDowell, Sandra Bernhard, Richard E. Grant, James Coburn, and Donald Burton.

Theatre 3: "Thelma & Louise" (†).

Theatre 4: "What About Bob?" (Frank Oz), with Bill Murray and Richard Dreyfuss.

Theatre 5: "Switch" (†).

Theatre 6: "FX2—The Deadly Art of Illusion" (†).

Metro Cinema 1 and 2, B'way at 99th. (222-1200)

Theatre 1: (Separate admissions) "Mannequin Two: On the Move" (Stewart Raffill); and "Impromptu" (†).

Theatre 2: "Straight Out of Brooklyn" (Matty Rich).

Olympia I and II, B'way at 107th. (865-8128)

Theatre 1: "Backdraft" (Ron Howard), with Kurt Russell, William Baldwin, Scott Glenn, Jennifer Jason Leigh, Rebecca DeMornay, Donald Sutherland, and Robert De Niro.

Theatre 2: "A Rage in Harlem" (†).

TIMES SQUARE AREA

Criterion Center, B'way at 44th. (354-0900)

Theatre 1: "Drop Dead Fred" (directed by Ate de Jong), with Phoebe Cates and Rik Mayall.

Theatre 2: "Hudson Hawk" (Michael Lehmann), with Bruce Willis, Danny Aiello, Andie MacDowell, Sandra Bernhard, Richard E. Grant, James Coburn, and Donald Burton.

Theatre 3: "Mannequin Two: On the Move" (Steward Raffill).

Theatre 4: "Out for Justice" (John Flynn), with Steven Seagal.

Theatre 5: "Dice Rules" (Jay Dubin), Andrew Dice Clay in concert.

Theatre 6: "Only the Lonely" (Chris Columbus), with John Candy, Maureen O'Hara, Ally Sheedy, Kevin Dunn, Milo O'Shea, Bert Remsen, Anthony Quinn, and James Belushi.

Embassy 1, B'way at 46th. (302-0494)

"What About Bob?" (Frank Oz), with Bill Murray and Richard Dreyfuss.

Embassy 2, 3, and 4, 7th Ave. at 47th. (730-7262)

Theatre 1: "FX2—The Deadly Art of Illusion" (†).

Theatre 2: "Wild Hearts Can't Be Broken" (Steve Miner), with Gabrielle Anwar and Michael Schoeffling.

Theatre 3: "The Silence of the Lambs" (†).

Loews Astor Plaza, 44th St. at B'way. (869-8340)

"A Rage in Harlem" (†).

National Twin, B'way at 44th. (869-0950)

Theatre 1: "Stone Cold" (Craig R. Baxley), with Brian Bosworth.

Theatre 2: "A Kiss Before Dying" (†).

West Side Cinema 1 and 2, 7th Ave. at 48th. (398-1720)

Theatre 1: Through May 30: "New Jack City" (Mario Van Peebles), with Wesley Snipes, Ice-T, Judd Nelson, and Van Peebles. From May 31: "Ambition" (Scott D. Goldstein), with Lou Diamond Phillips and Clancy Brown.

Theatre 2: "Switch" (†).

REVIVAL HOUSES

Biograph Cinema, 225 W. 57th. (582-4582)

Through May 28: "Shadow of a Doubt" (1942, directed by Alfred Hitchcock), with Teresa Wright, Joseph Cotten, Patricia Collinge, Hume Cronyn, and Henry Travers; and "Touch of Evil" (1958, Orson Welles), with Welles, Charlton Heston, and Janet Leigh.

May 29-30: "On Dangerous Ground" (1952, Nicholas Ray), with Ida Lupino, Robert Ryan, and Ward Bond; and "A Woman's Secret" (1949, Ray), with Maureen O'Hara, Melvyn Douglas, Gloria Grahame, and Bill Williams.

May 31-June 1: "Watch on the Rhine" (†) and "Tomorrow Is Forever" (†).

June 2-3: "Mrs. Parkington" (1944, Tay Garnett), with Greer Garson, Walter Pidgeon, Agnes Moorehead, and Edward Arnold; and "Daisy Kenyon" (1947, Otto Preminger), with Joan Crawford, Dana Andrews, and Henry Fonda.

From June 4: "West Side Story" (1961, Robert Wise), with Natalie Wood, Richard Beymer, Russ Tamblyn, Rita Moreno, and George Chakiris.

Film Forum 2, 209 W. Houston St. (727-8110)

May 27: "Midnight" (1939, Mitchell Leisen), with Claudette Colbert, Don Ameche, John Barrymore, and Mary Astor; and "Bluebeard's Eighth Wife" (1938, Ernst Lubitsch), with Colbert, Gary Cooper, David Niven, and Herman Bing.

May 28: "Music in the Air" (1934, Joe May), with Gloria Swanson and John Boles; and "Lottery Lover" (1935, William Thiele), with Lew Ayres.

May 29-30: "Arise, My Love" (1940, Mitchell Leisen), with Claudette Colbert, Ray Milland, Walter Abel, and Dennis O'Keefe; and "Hold Back the Dawn" (1941, Leisen), with Olivia de Havilland, Charles Boyer, and Paulette Goddard.

May 31-June 3: "Some Like It Hot" (†); and "The Seven Year Itch" (1955, Billy Wilder), with Marilyn Monroe, Tom Ewell, Victor Moore, Evelyn Keyes, and Sonny Tufts.

June 4: "Emile and the Detectives" (1931, Gerhard Lamprecht; in German, with English translation); and "Der Teufelsreporter" (1929, Ernst Laemmle).

June 5: "Rhythm on the River" (1940, Victor Schertzinger), with Bing Crosby and Mary Martin; and "What a Life" (1939, Theodore Reed), with Jackie Cooper, Eddie Bracken, and Betty Field.

Theatre 80 St. Marks, 80 St. Marks Pl. (254-7400)

May 27: "Los Olvidados" (1950, "The Young and the Damned"; Luis Buñuel; in Spanish); and "Viridiana" (1961, Buñuel; in Spanish), with Francisco Rabal and Silvia Pinal.

May 28: "Phone Call from a Stranger" (1952, Jean Negulesco), with Shelley Winters, Gary Merrill, and Bette Davis; and "The Scapegoat" (1959, Robert Hamer), with Alec Guinness and Bette Davis.

May 29: "The Sound and the Fury" (1969, Martin Ritt), with Yul Brynner, Joanne Woodward, and Margaret Leighton; and "Intruder in the Dust" (1949, Clarence

MOVIE HOUSES—Cont'd

Brown), with Claude Jarman, Jr., and Juano Hernández.

May 30: “Goodbye, Columbus” (1969, Larry Peerce), with Richard Benjamin, Ali MacGraw, and Jack Klugman; and “Diary of a Mad Housewife” (1970, Frank Perry), with Benjamin, Frank Langella, and Carrie Snodgress.

May 31-June 1: “The Trial” (†); and “The Third Man” (1950, Carol Reed), with Orson Welles, Joseph Cotten, Alida Valli, and Trevor Howard.

June 2: “Take the Money and Run” (1969, Woody Allen), with Allen and Janet Margolin; and “Bananas” (see blurb on page 24).

June 3: “The Rules of the Game” (1939, Jean Renoir; in French), with Marcel Dalio and Nora Gregor; and “Pépé le Moko” (†).

June 4: “Suddenly, Last Summer” (†); and “Holiday” (1938, George Cukor), with Katharine Hepburn, Cary Grant, Lew Ayres, Edward Everett Horton, and Doris Nolan.

June 5: “Gothic” (1986, Ken Russell), with Gabriel Byrne, Julian Sands, and Natasha Richardson; and “The Devils” (1971, Russell), with Oliver Reed and Vanessa Redgrave.

FILM LIBRARIES, ETC.

Museum of Modern Art, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9490)—May 27 at 2:30: A program of short films directed by Jack Smith, Conrad Friberg, and others. . . . ¶ May 27 at 5: A program of short animated films by Suzan Pitt, Anita Thacher, and David Ehrlich. . . . ¶ May 28 at 3 and May 31 at 6: A program of animated films by Pat Sullivan, Max Fleischer, and others. . . . ¶ May 28 at 6 and May 31 at 3: Ten “Felix the Cat” shorts from 1919 to 1928. . . . ¶ May 30 at 3 and 6: “On Borrowed Land” (1990, Matthew Westfall), a documentary. . . . ¶ June 1 at 2:30 and June 2 at 5: “Time” (1983), “A Life Without” (1987, in Estonian), and “Miss Saaremaa” (1989, in Estonian), all by Mark Soosaar, who will be present on June 1. . . . ¶ June 1 at 5 and June 4 at 3: “A Woman of Kinhu” (1973, in Estonian, with no English subtitles) and “A Man of Kinhu” (1986, in Estonian), both by Soosaar, who will be present on June 1. . . . ¶ June 2 at 2:30 and June 4 at 5: “State Elder” (1991, Soosaar; in Estonian). . . . ¶ June 3 at 3: “The Woman on the Beach” (†). . . . ¶ June 3 at 6:30: “January Journal” (1965) and “Winter Wheat” (1989), both by Mark Street, who will be present.

American Museum of the Moving Image, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria. (1-718 784-0077) —“The Art of Reality: Innovators of the Documentary.” June 1 at 2: “Style Wars” (1983, Tony Silver and Henry Chalfant). . . . ¶ June 1 at 4: “Inside Life Outside” (1988, Sachiko Hamada and Scott Sinkler). . . . ¶ June 2 at 2: “Eyes on the Prize: A Bridge to Freedom” (1987). . . . ¶ June 2 at 4: “Dear America: Letters Home from Vietnam” (1987, Bill Couturie).

Anthology Film Archives, 32-34 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (477-2714)—May 29-30 at 8 and 10 and May 31 at 11: “Dandy” (1988, Peter Sempel). . . . ¶ May 29 at 6: “October” (1928, Sergei Eisenstein; a Russian silent film). . . . ¶ May 30-June 1 at 8: Three different programs of films by Michel Auder. . . . ¶ May 31 at 9:30: “Michael” (1924, Carl Dreyer; a silent film). . . . ¶ June 1 at 5: “The Parson's Widow” (1921, Dreyer; a silent film). . . . ¶ June 1-2 and June 5 at 7: “Wedding Guests” (1990, Niko Brucher). . . . ¶ June 1 at 9:30 and June 2 at 8: Two different programs of films by Barry Gerson. . . . ¶ June 2 at 5: “Old and New” (1929, Eisenstein; a Russian silent film). . . . ¶ June 5 at 8: “Ivan the Terrible, Parts I and II” (1944-46, Eisenstein; in Russian).

Whitney Museum, Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-0537)—May 30-June 2 at 2: “Tales of the Forgotten Future, Part 2 and Part 3” (1990-91, Lewis Klahr).

Museum of Television and Radio, 1 E. 53rd St. (752-7684)—“On Stage at Carnegie Hall: A Centennial Celebration.” May 28-June 1: “Folk Music in the Concert Hall’ (1961, CBS), an episode of “Young People's Concerts,” with Leonard Bernstein. . . . From June 4: “Playing to Win” (1982, Bravo), the 1981 International Music Competition for Pianists; and “Carnegie Finals: The International American Music Competition for Pianists” (1982, Bravo). Showings Tuesdays at 2:30 and 5:30 and Wednesdays through Saturdays at 2:30. . . . ¶ “A Salute to Monty Python.” May 28-June 1: “Do Not Adjust Your Stocking” (1968), a Yuletide episode; and “Ripping Yarns: Roger of the Raj” (1979, BBC). . . . From June 4: “Monty Python's Fliegende Zirkus” (1973, WDR), the English-language special produced for German television. Showings Tuesdays at 12:15, 2:30, and 5:30; Wednesdays through Fridays at 12:15 and 2:30; and Saturdays at 12:15.

Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. (355-6160) —May 29 at 12:30, 3:15, 6, and 8:45: “L'Enfance de l'Art” (1988, Francis Girod; in French), with André Dussollier, Clotilde de Bayser, Anne-Marie Philipe, and Michel Bompoil. . . . ¶ June 5 at 12:30, 3:15, 6, and 8:45: “Baxter” (1988, Jérôme Boivin, in French), with Lise Delamare, Jean Mercure, Jacques Spiesser, and Evelyne Didi.

Donnell Library Center, 20 W. 53rd St. (621-0619)—May 28 at noon: “Body and Soul” (1947, Robert Rossen), with John Garfield and Lilli Palmer. . . . ¶ May 28 at 2:30: “The Jungle Book” (1942, Zoltán Korda and André de Toth), with Sabu. . . . ¶ May 30 at noon: “Balloon Safari” (1975, Alan and Joan Root), . . . ¶ June 4 at noon: “Breathless” (1959, Jean-Luc Godard), with Jean Seberg and Jean-Paul Belmondo. . . . ¶ June 4 at 2:30: “Born Free” (1965, James Hill), with Virginia McKenna and Bill Travers.

Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., State Office Building, 163 W. 125th St. (873-5040)—May 30 at 1, 4:05, and 7:10: “Glory” (1989, Edward Zwick), with Denzel Washington, Morgan Freeman, and Matthew Broderick; and “Fields of Endless Day” (1978, Terence McCarthey-Filgate). . . . ¶ May 31 at 7:30: “Joe's Bed-Stuy Barbershop: We Cut Heads” (1983, Spike Lee); and “House Party” (1990, Reginald Hudlin), with Christopher Reid and Robin Harris. . . . ¶ June 1 at 7: “Making ‘Do the Right Thing’ ” (1989, St. Clair Bourne), a documentary; and “Mo’ Better Blues” (1990, Spike Lee), with Denzel Washington, Cyndi Williams, Joie Lee, and Wesley Snipes. . . . ¶ June 2 at 1 and 6: “The Spook Who Sat by the Door” (1973, Ivan Dixon), with Lawrence Cook; “The Education of Sonny Carson” (1974, Michael Campus), with Rony Clanton; and “Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song” (1973, Melvin Van Peebles).

Japan Society, 333 E. 47th St. (752-3015)—May 31 and June 3 at 6:30: “The Dancer” (1989, Masahiro Shinoda; in Japanese), with Hiromi Go and Lisa Wolf.

IN BRIEF

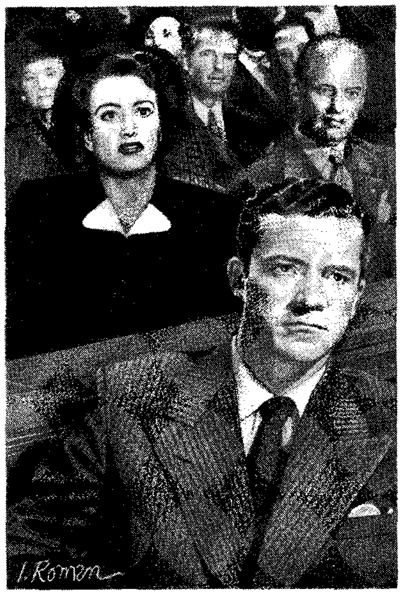
SEE ABOVE FOR THEATRE ADDRESSES AND TELEPHONE NUMBERS.
IF A MOVIE HAS BEEN REVIEWED IN "THE CURRENT CINEMA" DURING THE PAST TWO YEARS, THE DATE OF ITS REVIEW IS GIVEN.

(The following notes are by Pauline Kael, Terrence Rafferty, and Michael Sragow.)

Alice—Woody Allen's latest picture is an awkward blend of whimsy and moralizing. The title character, played by Mia Farrow, is a pampered Upper East Side lady-who-lunches. She lives in a huge apartment with her handsome husband (William Hurt), her adorable children, and a staff, and she looks terrific. But her life, the movie tells us, is totally empty and false. A Chinatown doctor (Keye Luke) gives her a variety of herbal remedies to knock the yuppie malaise out of her system. One of them makes her invisible; one makes her irresistible to men; and so on. As these fantasy episodes mount up, Alice begins to see how artificial her life is, how far she's strayed from the pure ideals of her Catholic girlhood, how much more love she needs than she has been getting, and what a revolting piece of Wasp slime her husband is. In the end, the heroine seems, incredibly, to have redeemed herself through self-absorption; the movie doesn't benefit from any such miracle. Although there are more jokes here than in any of Allen's last few features, the picture isn't really a comedy; it's a sermon with gags. The large cast also includes Joe Mantegna, Alec Baldwin, Blythe Danner, Judy Davis, Bob Balaban, and Bernadette Peters (who does a sensational brief turn as a cynical muse).—T.R. (Reviewed in our issue of 12/31/90.) (Quad Cinema).

An Angel at My Table—With Kerry Fox, directed by Jane Campion. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Loews Village Theatre VII, and Loews Fine Arts.)

The Ballad of the Sad Café—An adaptation, directed by Simon Callow, of Carson McCullers' fable about unhappy love in a tiny Deep South mill town. The story describes a perfect circle of unrequited love among its three main characters: Miss Amelia Evans (Vanessa Redgrave), a tall, awkward woman who is the town's wealthiest resident and its most forbidding eccentric; her cousin Lymon (Cort Hubbert), a hunchbacked dwarf; and a mean cracker named Marvin Macy (Keith Carradine), who was once, briefly, Amelia's husband. Callow and the screenwriter, Michael Hirst, have adapted the story very faithfully, but they've missed its elusive, slyly comic voice. The narrative unfolds in a solemn, glum, stately manner—more like a Biblical parable than like a crazy backwoods folktale. The filmmakers seem to have been deceived by the apparent simplicity of McCullers' style—its fablelike directness and its bedtime-story intimacy of tone. They aim for a kind of mythic purity that's almost impossible to achieve in the movies. Despite the heroic efforts of Redgrave and Carradine, the characters in this picture don't seem quite human, and the stylized dialogue, much of it lifted outright from McCullers, doesn't have the poetic force that the filmmakers must have hoped it would have; everyone in the movie just sounds simpleminded. This picture is a brave undertaking, and it is clearly a labor of love, but it's doomed. Like all the strange loves of McCullers' story, it does not have a fortunate outcome: its object remains alone, untouched—impervious to the tenderest attentions. Also with Rod Steiger, Lanny Flaherty, and Earl Hindman.—T.R. (5/20/91) (Angelika Film Center.)



At the Biograph Cinema, Joan Crawford and Dana Andrews in “Daisy Kenyon”

Citizen Kane (1941)—The Orson Welles film is generally considered the greatest American film of the sound period, and it may be more fun than any other great movie. Based on the life of William Randolph Hearst, it's an exuberant, muckraking attack on an archetypal economic baron. With Welles, of course, and Joseph Cotten, Dorothy Comingore, Agnes Moorehead, Everett Sloane, George Coulouris, Ruth Warrick, Ray Collins, Erskine Sanford, William Alland, Paul Stewart, Fortunio Bonanova, Gus Schilling, and Philip Van Zandt. Screenplay by Herman J.

Mankiewicz and Welles; cinematography by Gregg Toland; editing by Robert Wise and Mark Robson; music by Bernard Herrmann; art direction by Van Nest Polglase and Perry Ferguson.—P.K. (Loews Village Theatre VII, and Loews Festival.)

The Comfort of Strangers—Harold Pinter's screenplay, adapted from a novel by Ian McEwan, is a kinky contemporary variation on the sort of plot that made Victorian readers shiver—the story of innocents lured into the clutches of charming villains. The innocents here are an unmarried English couple (Natasha Richardson and Rupert Everett) vacationing in Venice; the evil seducers are a husband and wife (Christopher Walken and Helen Mirren) whose tastes run to voyeurism and sadomasochism; the dread lair in which the monsters toy with their prey is a huge, ornately furnished apartment with a spectacular view of the city. The director, Paul Schrader, dresses his characters in Armani and sets the camera in motion to swirl gracefully around them, picking up miragelike shimmers from the canals and beautiful but ominous architectural details; the languorous camera movements create an authentically gothic sense of catastrophe just around the corner. Walken glides effortlessly through his role as the embodiment of Old World evil. He gives the character a lordly, sinister air, and suggests, as well, that he's wearing something really odd underneath his superbly tailored white suits. And Richardson is characteristically amazing: she brings a touch of humanity to this rather formal party. The movie improves on the novel by jettisoning its dubious psychology and its pretensions to literary significance. Schrader treats the story as an elegant horror-movie game, a trick done with mirrors, and he carries it off. Dante Spinotti's cinematography and Gianni Quaranta's production design contribute to the luxurious, decadent atmosphere. Music by Angelo Badalamenti. —T.R. (4/8/91) (Angelika Film Center.)

Dances with Wolves—Set during the Civil War, this big Indians-versus-Cavalry epic is like a New Age social-studies lesson. Kevin Costner, who directed and is the star, has an untroubled face and laid-back diction. As Lieutenant Dunbar, a Union officer, he sees that the Sioux have a superior culture and he changes sides. This is a nature-boy movie, a kid's daydream of being an Indian. When Dunbar has become a Sioux named Dances with Wolves, he writes in his journal that he knows for the first time who he really is. Costner has feathers in his hair and feathers in his head. He and his friend Michael Blake (who worked up the material with him in mind and then wrote the novel and the screenplay) are trying to show the last years of the Sioux as an independent nation from the Sioux point of view, and it's probably that sympathy for the Indians that the audience responds to. But Costner is a moviemaking novice: instead of helping us understand the Sioux, he simply makes the Sioux like genial versions of us. This three-hour Western weeper, with its sluggish action and poorly shaped scenes, was made by a bland megalomaniac. (The Indians should have named him Plays with Camera.) Shot in South Dakota; the wide-screen cinematography, by Dean Semler, is spacious and open at times, and there are fine images of buffalo pounding by. With Mary McDonnell, Wes Chaykin, Robert Pastorelli, Graham Greene as Kicking Bird, and Rodney A. Grant as Wind in His Hair.—P.K. (12/17/90) (Village East Cinemas.... ¶ Eastside Cinema; through May 30.)

Defending Your Life—The setting of Albert Brooks' disappointing new comedy is a place called Judgment City, which, according to this picture, is where people from Southern California go after death. Here recently completed lives are examined and evaluated, in a formal proceeding something like a trial: if the defendant wins the case, he moves up the cosmic ladder to a higher form of consciousness. The hero, Daniel Miller (Brooks), a yuppie adman who met his untimely end in a brand-new BMW, naturally believes in upward mobility; in death, as in life, he wants to impress the higher-ups and get that promotion. Although this sounds like an ideal setup for Brooks' kind of comedy, the film is mild-mannered and blandly whimsical, and its rhythms are sluggish. The humor doesn't have any satiric edge, because the character Brooks has written for himself isn't the egotistical, grotesquely needy baby boomer he played in his three previous movies. Brooks is celebrating qualities he used to satirize, and there's something smarmy about his attempt to turn himself into a lovable schlemiel—to cast a warmer, more flattering light on the self that his other pictures mercilessly exposed. Also with Meryl Streep, Lee Grant, and, as the hero's lawyer, Rip Torn, who periodically energizes the movie with some lunatic courtroom theatricality.—T.R. (4/22/91) (Quad Cinema.... ¶ Loews Paramount; through May 29.... ¶ Cinema 3rd Avenue; through May 30.)

Eating—All the action in Henry Jaglom's film takes place at the fortieth-birthday party of a Southern California woman named Helene (Lisa Richards), and all the characters—thirty-eight of them—are women. None of the women at this party—with the exception of Helene's mother (Frances Bergen), who represents the values of an older generation—can eat without guilt; several of them have clinical eating disorders, for which they hate themselves. Jaglom films them in his usual group-therapy style: the camera remains fixed as characters lob banal confessions and accusations at each other. This is meant to create the illusion of raw emotional truth, but the bulimics' ball Jaglom throws here isn't much of a party, and it's bad therapy, too. The big naked truth that pops out of the cake is: women are so obsessed with their bodies that they're incapable of enjoying even the simple pleasure of eating. Whatever Jaglom may have intended, his film winds up trivializing its theme and humiliating its subjects. He's advertising the movie as "A Very Serious Comedy About Women and Food," but its "serious" message is glibly offensive, and there's nothing funny about it. Also with Gwen Welles, Mary Crosby, Nelly Alard, Marlena Giovi, and Daphna Kastner. —T.R. (5/20/91) (Cinema Village 12th Street.)

La Femme Nikita—The end of French cinema as we know it. Written and directed by Luc Besson. With Anne Parillaud, Jean-Hugues Anglade, Tcheky Karyo, and (in a cameo) Jeanne Moreau. In French.—T.R. (Angelika Film Center, and Carnegie Hall Cinemas.)

FX2—The Deadly Art of Illusion—This sequel cuts its best caper early. Rollie Tyler (Bryan Brown), movie illusionist turned high-tech toymaker, sics a remote-controlled clown—a circusy beaut with red hair and blue eyes—against another kind of clown: a slimy hit man who's beginning to miss his targets. Rollie uses an elaborately rigged jacket to make the mechanical cutup mimic all his creator's movements. The fight becomes a two-against-one, tag-team wrestling match. The whole movie should unfold this wittily. Rollie once again joins up with Leo McCarthy (Brian Dennehy), now a private eye. Together they suss out why the hit man murdered the honest-cop ex-husband of Rollie's new ladylove (Rachel Ticotin). The effects remain special throughout, but the "FX" series swerves wildly on plot turns while dispensing recklessly with bad guys and good women. Diane Venora, who got killed off in the first film, finally gets a decent memorial nod in this one. Josie DeGuzman gives a warm performance as a helpful government hacker, and Joanna Gleason brings a humorous, knowing incisiveness to the role of a tough-talking prosecutor. Directed by Richard Franklin, from a script by Bill Condon.—M.S. (Movieland 8th Street Triplex, Loews 19th Street East 6, Loews 34th Street Showplace, Manhattan Twin, Loews 84th Street Sixplex, and Embassy.)

Impromptu—James Lapine's film is an ebullient and absurdly entertaining account of the famous love affair of George Sand and Frédéric Chopin. The script, by Sarah Kernochan, makes Sand's wooing and winning of frail, chaste young Chopin into a busy exercise in farce, with a full complement of deception and setbacks and misunderstandings. Celebrities of the Romantic movement—Delacroix, Musset, and Liszt among them—are put through their paces, along with George and Frédéric, in the salons and ballrooms and country houses of eighteen-thirties France; they issue florid declarations of love, hurl barbed epigrams at their rivals, challenge each other to duels, and, over all, make complete asses of themselves in their pursuit of the sublime. They're lively company. The historical figures in this movie are cartoons, but they're cartoons with recognizable human qualities, and the actors look as if they were having a wonderful time charging

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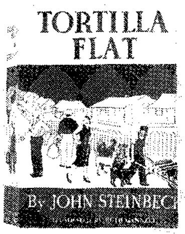

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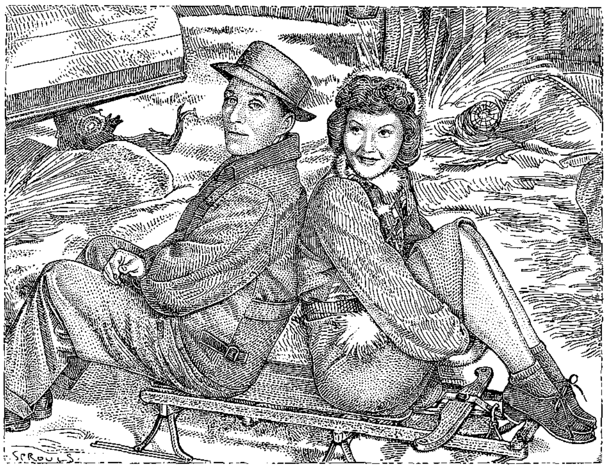
around in their period costumes. Hugh Grant's Chopin is a brilliant caricature of the Romantic ideal of the artist; he gives the character an air of befuddled unworldliness, and punctuates his readings with delicately timed tubercular coughs. Judy Davis plays Sand—a great actress in a great role. Davis makes Sand's passionate absurdities both funny and tremendously moving; this woman's willingness to embarrass herself seems a kind of romantic heroism. Also with Bernadette Peters, Julian Sands (as Liszt), Mandy Patinkin (as Musset), Emma Thompson, Ralph Brown (as Delacroix), George Corraface, Anton Rodgers, and Anna Masset. The costumes, by Jenny Beavan, are spectacular.—T.R. (5/6/91) (59th Street East Cinema, Art Greenwich Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, Worldwide Cinemas, and Metro Cinema.)

Journey of Hope—It's actually a journey into fear: a struggling Turkish farmer takes his wife and young son on a perilous trek to Switzerland, hoping to find "paradise behind the mountains." Black-market operators strip them of their possessions and dignity. The action in this icy muckraker culminates when the family and other Turks cross the Alps at night—without a guide—in a snowstorm. Inspired by a 1988 newspaper article, Xavier Koller's movie is just as topical now —it recalls the Kurdish catastrophe, even though these Turks are economic (not political) refugees, fleeing by the dozens (not the hundreds of thousands). But Koller doesn't give the audience a guide, either; he fails to lay out the issues coherently and dramatically. Intentionally or not, he makes his hero (the dour patriarch) seem foolish for abandoning a harsh but organic rural life. For better or worse—mostly worse—"Journey of Hope" duplicates the Latin-American refugee saga "El Norte": the eerie, harrowing border crossings are the only scenes as powerful as they should be. The rest amount to a lament for the dysfunctional Family of Man. (In Turkish, Italian, and Swiss German, with English and French subtitles.)—M.S. (Quad Cinema.)

Ju Dou—It's been compared to James M. Cain, but the postman barely rings once in this tale of adultery Chinese style. In a small mountain village in the twenties, an impotent dye-mill owner (Li Wei), crazed over his lack of an heir, tortures his beautiful young bride (Gong Li). She seeks comfort in the arms of his worker nephew (Li Bao-Tian). There's no compelling plot, only the grinding inevitability of fate and tradition. The director, Zhang Yimou, simply metes out punishment to the lovers, the tyrant—and the audience. The lovers' son does most of the damage. He has the lethal power of the Children of the Damned—unfortunately, without the gimmicky zest of their eerie, glowing eyeballs. Zhang started out as a painter and still photographer. He remains one, devoting more attention to the dye mill's set design than to the story or the characters. The bolts of fabric are colored in subtle, vivid hues; the people are made out of whole cloth. In Mandarin.—M.S. (Lincoln Plaza.)

A Kiss Before Dying—Splat! That's the sound of one rich twin clapping to the ground. Soon, Matt Dillon, her lover-killer, moves on to her identical sister (Sean Young plays both women). The writer-director, James Dearden, botches Ira Levin's creepy best-seller about an upwardly mobile psychopath. (This version is even worse than the 1956 one starring Robert Wagner and Joanne Woodward.) Dillon takes a vacation from his "Drugstore Cowboy" level of acting; Young hasn't earned one yet. He practices somnambulism and she impersonates dual zombies. Dearden's idea of black comedy is to show "Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein" on a hotel TV while Dillon, in the manner of "Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer," dismembers a body in the bathtub. Co-starring Max von Sydow and Joy Lee.—M.S. (Chelsea Cinemas, and National Twin.)

The Object of Beauty—Jake (John Malkovich) and Tina (Andie MacDowell) are a glamorous American couple camping out in a suite in a swank London hotel. They're unable to settle their account, which when the movie begins stands at about six thousand pounds, because Jake, a speculator, has blown all his money on a bad investment. Jake and Tina are unmarried and have no permanent address; they're charming, attractive drifters, getting by on style. In a sense, they're throwbacks to the sophisticated and slightly disreputable couples who floated airily through thirties romantic comedies: no-strings types who stick together for the best shallow reasons—for sex and laughs and the shared kick of living the high life without having to work too hard. The picture, written and directed by Michael Lindsay-Hogg, is conceived as high-style fluff, but it never delivers quite as much irresponsible fun as it promises. It's like a Lubitsch movie without the speed and the grace and the blissful inconsequentiality. Malkovich, however, is as unaccountably magnetic here as he was in "Dangerous Liaisons." His performance is a postmodern mutation of thirties style, an ungodly hybrid of William Powell and Boris Karloff, and it's sensationally funny. This is as original a piece of acting as you'll ever see in a romantic comedy. The supporting players are an unusually lively group: Lolita Davidovich, Peter Riegert, Joss Ackland, and Bill Paterson.—T.R. (4/22/91) (Village East Cinemas, and Worldwide Cinemas. . . . ¶ Murray Hill Cinemas; through May 30.)



At Film Forum 2, Bing Crosby and Mary Martin in "Rhythm on the River"

Paris Is Burning—Jennie Livingston's documentary about gay black and Latino men who compete in drag balls is a beautiful piece of work—lively, intelligent, exploratory. The drag queens we see here seem to be holding up a mirror to the world of the empowered as they see it in movies, TV shows, and magazines. In the ballroom, some present themselves as elegant, glamorous women in designer outfits, and walk with the hip-swinging slouch of runway models, while others adopt more mundane personas: college students (of both sexes); military men; Wall Street businessmen; aristocrats at play, dressed for yachting or riding to hounds. The criteria by which all these turns are judged is verisimilitude—"realness." The material is almost too rich, too suggestive. Everything about the ball culture signifies so blatantly and so promiscuously that the movie induces a kind of semiotic daze. Livingston is smart enough not to reduce her subjects to the sum of their possible meanings, perhaps because she realizes that the way the drag performers manipulate image and fetishes and the iconography of popular culture is for many of them a sophisticated form of humor. The most self-aware of the gay men in this picture revel in the ironies of their social and sexual identities, and Livingston makes us appreciate the comic grace and the strange wisdom of that approach. Like all the best documentary filmmakers, she does her subjects the honor of allowing them to retain some of their mystery.—T.R. (3/25/91) (Film Forum.)

Pépé le Moko (1937)—Superb entertainment. A classic romantic melodrama of the thirties, and one of the most compelling of all the fatalistic French screen romances, yet seen by few Americans because it was remade in Hollywood two years later as "Algiers," starring Charles Boyer and "introducing" Hedy Lamarr. "Algiers" was so closely copied from "Pépé le Moko" that look-alikes were cast in many of the roles, and some sequences were followed shot by shot. But "Algiers" is glamorous pop that doesn't compare to the original, directed by Julien Duvivier and starring Jean Gabin as the gangster who finds love but can't find his freedom. No one who saw "Pépé" is likely to forget the scene in which the homesick-for-Paris Gabin looks at a Métro ticket and recites the names of the stations. Ironically, Duvivier had hoped to make an American-style gangster film and had drawn some of his characters from "Scarface." With Mireilla Balin, Marcel Dalio, Gaston Modot, Gabriel Gabrio, Line Noro, Saturnin Fabre, and Charpin. The script, by Henri Jeanson, is based on a novel by Ashelbé (Henri La Barthe), at one time commissioner of the Paris police. In French. —P.K. (Theatre 80 St. Marks; June 3.)

A Rage in Harlem—"If Christ knew what kind of Christians He got here in Harlem, He'd climb back up on the Cross and start over." The screenwriters, John Toles-Bey and Bobby Crawford, take that line from Chester Himes' 1957 crime novel on which the film is based, and Bill Duke, the director, uses it as a tone setter for his flamboyant, engaging action comedy. This unruly, unassuming movie is filled with pagan enthusiasms. As a Southern belle called Imabelle, Robin Givens carries both the MacGuffin—a trunk filled with gold ore—and the film. It's about a mismatch made in Heaven between this devil with a red dress on and the churchgoing mortician's aide (Forest Whitaker) who gives her shelter when she comes North to turn the gold into cash. Givens' performance is a skillfully prolonged sashay, and Whitaker's is one long, uproarious gulp—until, with the help of his estranged half brother Goldy (Gregory Hines), he fights for his woman. The Givens-Whitaker chemistry doesn't bond every element of the raggedy plot. But the picture is diverting—Duke and the writers come up with scampering jokes. Once again, playing a shady character brings out the best and the baddest in Danny Glover (he's a criminal kingpin called Easy Money). Zakes Mokae has a sassy, robust sweetness in the role of a transvestite brothel owner. Badja Djola is scarily persistent as a villain named Slim—Imabelle's previous man. If the title refers to anything, it's Slim.—M.S. (Olympia, and Loews Astor Plaza. . . . ¶ Loews 19th Street East 6, and 8th St. Playhouse; through May 30.)

The Silence of the Lambs—Adapted from a novel by Thomas Harris, Jonathan Demme's thriller is artful pulp—tabloid material treated with intelligence and care and a weird kind of sensitivity. The heroine, Clarice Starling (Jodie Foster), is an earnest F.B.I. trainee who is selected to interview Dr. Hannibal Lecter (Anthony Hopkins), a psychiatrist who is also a famous mass murderer; her superiors hope that Lecter's twisted expertise can somehow be used to help them catch a serial killer known as Buffalo Bill, who flays his victims. In the course of the movie, these conversations between the trainee and the psychiatrist turn into edgy, complex transactions in which she reveals pieces of her inner life in return for his hints on how to find the killer. Hopkins plays the monster with a fine, cold relish: he gives the character a mesmeric animal stillness, the terrifying opacity of a cobra. And the impact of his performance is heightened by its contrast with everything surrounding it: the scrupulous realism of Demme's style, the mundane details of police procedure, and, in particular, the emotional transparence of the heroine. Demme keeps our attention on Starling and her shifting reactions to the world, and his most striking achievement in this picture is his direction of Jodie Foster. The suspense of this manhunt isn't of the straight-ahead kind we're used to: it's reflective, oscillating between approach and avoidance—it has an unnerving intimacy. Also with Scott Glenn, Ted Levine (as Buffalo Bill), Anthony Heald, and Brooke Smith. The screenplay, which is extremely faithful to the novel, is by Ted Tally.—T.R. (2/25/91) (Loews 19th Street East 6, and Embassy.)

Some Like It Hot (1959)—A comedy set in the Prohibition era, with transvestism, impotence, role confusion, and borderline inversion—and all hilariously innocent, though always on the brink of really disastrous double-entendre. Tony Curtis and Jack Lemmon are the musicians who witness the St. Valentine's Day Massacre and then hide out from the mobsters by disguising themselves as women and joining an all-girl band. Marilyn Monroe and Joe E. Brown are their somewhat confused love partners. Curtis demonstrates a parodistic gift with an imitation of Cary Grant (which he went on doing for years afterward), and Lemmon is demoniacally funny—he really gives in to women's clothes, and begins to think of himself as a sexy girl. Monroe gives perhaps her most characteristic performance, which means that she's both charming and embarrassing; Brown is inspired, the way he was years before in Max Reinhardt's movie of "A Midsummer Night's Dream," when he made some of us weep from laughter. With George Raft, Pat O'Brien, Nehemiah Persoff, Mike Mazurki, Tom Kennedy, George E. Stone, and, on the soundtrack, Matty Malneck's orchestra, with Art Pepper, Shelly Manne, Barney Kessel, and Leroy Vinegar. Directed (unevenly) by Billy Wilder, who also collaborated on the screenplay with I. A. L. Diamond. For collectors of useless movie memorabilia: in one of the earlier versions of this material, a German musical film, the orchestra girls were called the Alpine Violets.—P.K. (Film Forum 2; May 31-June 3.)

Spartacus (1960)—This may be the best-paced and most slyly entertaining of all the decadent-ancient-Rome spectacular films. It's a great big cartoon drama, directed by Stanley Kubrick, with Kirk Douglas at his most muscular as the slave gladiator Spartacus, who leads a rebellion of his fellow-slaves against the might of Rome. Spartacus makes some conscientious speeches—out of Howard Fast (who wrote the novel) by way of Dalton Trumbo (who did the screenplay)—but there's so much else going on that it's easy to brush off the moralizing. Laurence Olivier is Spartacus' antagonist, Crassus, a devious patrician who wants to rule Rome in the name of order—he is designed as a supersubtle Fascist. Crassus is a wonderfully gaudy character: he takes Tony Curtis, a young "singer of songs," as his sexual favorite, but he also has a fancy for the slave girl whom Spartacus loves—Jean Simmons. She has never been more beautiful, and the emotions that appear on her humor-filled face are blessedly sane. Peter Ustinov is superb as a slave dealer, who along with his grovelling sycophancy and his merchant's greed has his resentments; and Charles Laughton, amusingly wide in his toga, is a wily old Roman senator. (The two of them have a chat about the beneficial effects of corpulence.) As a gladiator who is Spartacus' friend and who is forced to fight him, Woody Strode has the quietest, most elegant physical presence in the movie. Cinematography by Russell Metty; music by Alex North.—P.K. (Worldwide Cinemas.)

Suddenly, Last Summer (1959)—One of Tennessee Williams' feverous fantasies, padded out by Joseph L. Mankiewicz, the director, and by Williams and Gore Vidal, who did the screenplay. They should never have allowed the audience so much time to think about what's going on: the short play turns into a ludicrous, lumbering horror movie. Katharine Hepburn is rather amusing as the Southern-belle dragon lady whose homosexual poet son, Sebastian, was killed and partly eaten by the North African boys he'd preyed upon. Elizabeth Taylor is her distraught niece, whom she's trying to get lobotomized so that the girl won't be able to tell the story. Taylor works hard at her big monologue, trying to give us the shudders, but Mankiewicz has delayed her revelations too long. Montgomery Clift, in possibly his worst performance, is the dim-witted neurosurgeon who can't seem to get anything into his eminent head.—P.K. (Theatre 80 St. Marks; June 4.)

Switch—Blake Edwards (unofficially) reincarnates Vincente Minnelli's lame 1964 comedy, "Goodbye, Charlie." The plot and the attitudes *seem* twenty-seven years old. Ellen Barkin has the Debbie Reynolds role—a womanizer who's killed and comes back to earth as a woman. Barkin (like Reynolds) is transformed outside, not in: she's a macho guy stuffed into a curvy figure. When Barkin says she'll never get used to having such a great body, she recalls Reynolds' saying that she'll no longer have to go to Brigitte Bardot movies—she can just pull down the shades. Barkin sermonizes about date rape and male condescension, but usually she expresses her budding feminism by socking men. (The fisticuffs are on the same level as Madonna's making muscles.) Barkin feels authentically female only when—gasp—she becomes pregnant. The large and wasted cast includes Jimmy Smits (as his/her best friend/lover), Tony Roberts, JoBeth Williams (as the woman whose gun sets everything off), and Lorraine Bracco (as a lesbian cosmetics magnate) in a squeamish subplot. Edwards' work here has the crude slapstick vitality that appeals mostly to easily titillated twelve-year-olds.—M.S. (Village East Cinemas, Murray Hill Cinemas, Sutton, 86th Street East Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, Loews 84th Street Sixplex, and West Side Cinemas.)

Thelma & Louise—With Susan Sarandon and Geena Davis, directed by Ridley Scott. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Loews Village Theatre VII, Loews 34th Street Showplace, Loews New York Twin, Guild, and Loews 84th Street Sixplex.)

Tomorrow Is Forever (1946)—One of the most preposterous of the many variants on the "Enoch Arden" theme. A cherub-faced chemist named MacDonald (Orson Welles) gets so badly shot up in the First World War that he prefers to let his wife (Claudette Colbert) think he's dead; he returns, transformed bewilderingly into a shattered European, to find that she has married the industrialist for whom he's going to work. Wearing a wig and false whiskers, dragging a gimpy leg, and rolling gutturals around on his tongue, Welles is so transparently Welles that it's pretty funny that Colbert doesn't recognize him. That's the only humor in this pallbearer-paced weeper. With Natalie Wood as the child the poor goof can't reveal himself to, and George Brent, Lucile Watson, and Richard Long. Directed by Irving Pichel, from Lenore Coffee's script, based on Gwen Bristow's novel.—P.K. (Biograph Cinema; May 31-June 1.)

Toy Soldiers—The movie equivalent of an action comic book made up entirely of teen sidekicks. The title characters are standard-issue smart-asses at a school of last resort for ne'er-do-well preppies. Their enemies are a remarkably stupid, brutal, and unlucky bunch of terrorists who always arrive too late and stay too long—no match for the Yankee ingenuity of half a dozen kids who are mostly dirty behind the ears. The bad guys are after the son of a federal judge who's trying a Latin-American drug baron; when they find out that the boy has left the campus, they take the whole school hostage. It's slick swill, well edited by Michael Kahn. Daniel Petrie, Jr., directed, and co-wrote the youth-flattering script (from William P. Kennedy's novel) with David Koepp. With Sean Astin (the chief hell-raiser); Andrew Divoff; (the chief terrorist—the drug lord's son), and Louis Gossett, Jr., and Denholm Elliott, who do their duty as the dean and the headmaster.—M.S. (Loews 19th Street East 6.)

The Trial (1962)—Orson Welles' theatricality and bravado would seem to be especially unsuited to the matter-of-fact comic horror of the Kafka novel, but he manages some striking effects that aren't at all jarring. This little-seen film has effective passages; it's more than an honorable try, though the hollow sound (that is, of the English-language version) is sometimes off-putting. With Anthony Perkins, Jeanne Moreau, Romy Schneider, Akim Tamiroff, Fernand Ledoux, Elsa Martinelli, Jess Hahn, Suzanne Flon, Madeleine Robinson, Michel Lonsdale, and Welles. Cinematography by Edmond Richard; the pin-screen animation of the prologue is by Alexandre Alexeieff and Claire Parker.—P.K. (Theatre 80 St. Marks; May 31-June 1.)

Truly, Madly, Deeply—A lovely, original comedy about a young woman, named Nina (Juliet Stevenson), who is obsessed with the memory of her dead lover. The writer and director, Anthony Minghella, establishes an unusual, delicately varied mood, and the film moves gracefully from a realistic mode into a fantastic one. One night, Nina's lover, Jamie (Alan Rickman), reappears in her flat, and his presence seems perfectly natural to us: he has emerged from a setting that is already charged with the heroine's feelings for him. Once he's back, she has to confront, in the most concrete way, what it would really mean to live the rest of her life with a dead guy as her significant other: the movie is less a ghost story than a weird kind of domestic comedy. Minghella draws us into a fresh and startlingly humane vision of modern urban life; the details of the heroine's way of living always seem to point beyond themselves, and there's an emotional unity to everything we see. Minghella writes dialogue that sounds casual but somehow takes us straight to the heart of his work's larger concerns, and he directs the actors beautifully. Rickman is unexpectedly romantic here, and very funny besides. And Stevenson gives a radiant performance: she doesn't have a false moment, or a boring one, in the whole picture.—T.R. (5/6/91) (Worldwide Cinema, and Cinema 3.)

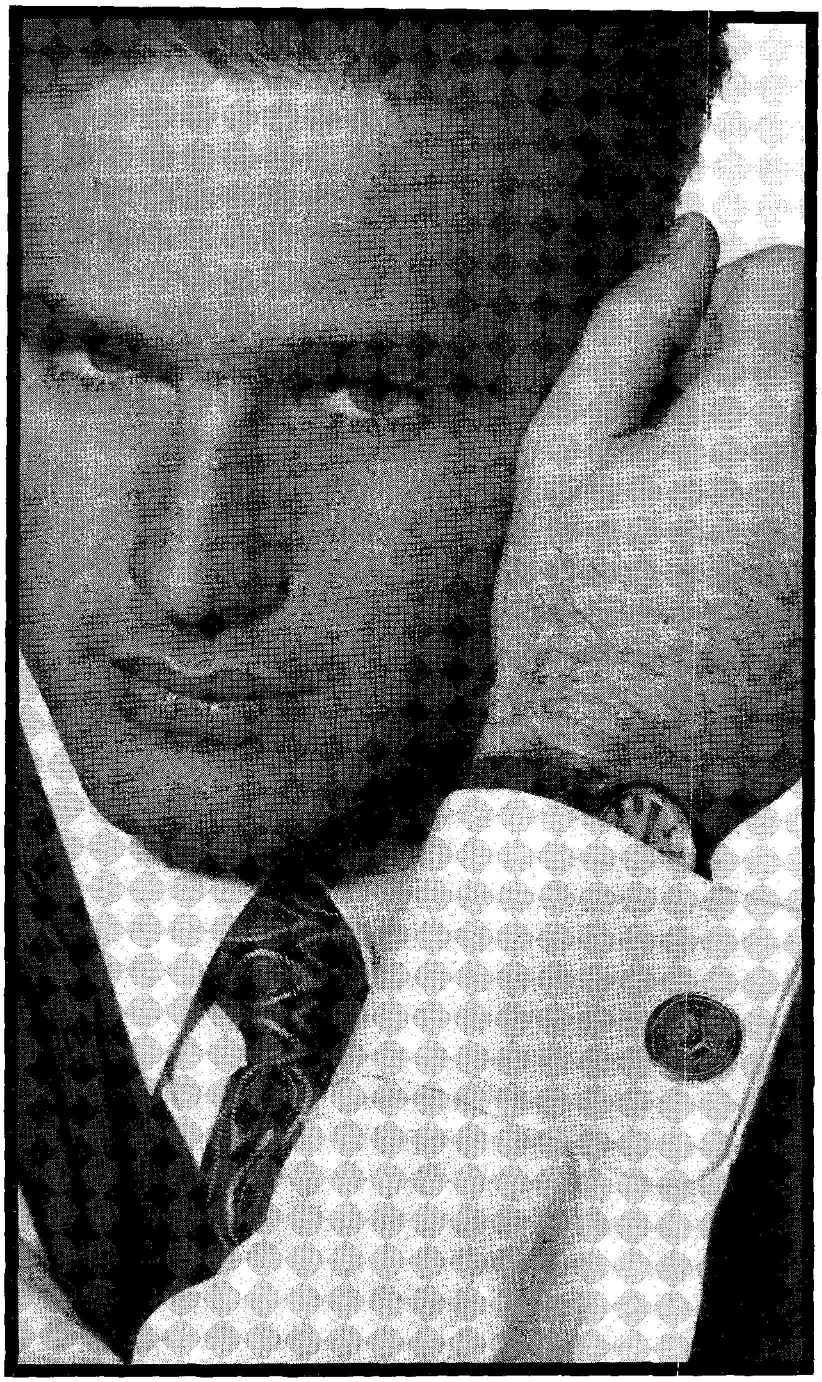
The Vanishing—George Sluizer's film has a simple, powerful thriller hook: a young Dutch woman, Saskia (the radiant Johanna Ter Steege), vacationing in the South of France with her boyfriend, Rex (Gene Bervoets), walks into a highway rest stop to buy a soda and beer and never comes back. Rex's search for Saskia, which takes place over several years, produces suspense of an unusually melancholy kind. This fiendishly intelligent little movie is adapted from a novel called "The Golden Egg," by the Dutch writer Tim Krabbé (who collaborated with Sluizer on the adaptation), and its form is essentially literary. It's a sophisticated example of the sort of hermetic intellectual mysteries that Borges is famous for: the fates of Saskia and Rex are worked out with an almost geometric precision. But the movie's rigor isn't alienating, and its symmetries are evocative rather than merely clever. The film is about ordinary lives interrupted, hijacked out of time, and Sluizer, with documentary-style attentiveness to detail, does justice to the varied beauty of ordinariness. The narrative is constructed with flawless elegance, but the movie is far less self-contained than it seems: traces of deep feeling keep escaping from the artifice, like puffs of breath into cold, thin air. Not many thrillers have the sort of suggestiveness this picture has. It's a small classic. Bernard-Pierre Donnadieu gives a chilling performance as the perverse, enigmatic villain. In Dutch and French.—T.R. (1/28/91) (Bleecker Movie House.)

Watch on the Rhine (1943)—Lillian Hellman's 1941 Broadway play—a cautionary polemical melodrama about the danger of Fascism in the United States—is housebound and fearfully lofty. She performs staggering melodramatic tricks in order to get a big confrontation scene; Dashiell Hammett is credited with the screenplay, but from the theatrical look and sound of things he can't have changed much. Paul Lukas is the European underground leader who brings his American wife (Bette Davis) and three children home to the Washington mansion of her mother (Lucile Watson). The film has some inadvertent humor: the children of this liberal couple are the most highly disciplined little prigs imaginable. Lukas, repeating his stage role, won an Academy Award; Davis is subdued and unexciting. With George Coulouris as a suave, vile Fascist, Geraldine Fitzgerald, Donald Woods, Henry Daniell, and Beulah Bondi. Directed by Herman Shumlin.—P.K. (Biograph Cinema; May 31-June 1.)

The Woman on the Beach (1947)—This Hollywood film by Jean Renoir was cut, reëdited, and partly reshot after a disastrous sneak preview in Santa Barbara. Renoir said that he was trying to do "a love story in which there was no love," in which the attractions "were purely physical," but that after he remade it, it was "neither flesh nor fish," having "lost its raison d'être." What's left suggests that Renoir was attempting an American film with the sensual atmosphere of his French work, such as "La Bête Humaine"; it's a seventy-one-minute melodrama, but it's slow-rhythmed and full of dreamlike ambiguities, tensions, suspicions. Joan Bennett is the petulant femme fatale, married to a great painter (Charles Bickford) who has gone blind. Robert Ryan is the Coast Guard lieutenant who finds her so irresistible that she has him trying to do in her husband. The film, hampered further by a fiercely obtrusive Hanns Eisler score, was a box-office calamity, and finished Renoir in Hollywood; he didn't make another movie until the fifties, when he went to India for "The River." Some critics (most notably Jacques Rivette) consider this mutilated film a masterpiece, and that's an appealing idea, but one may have to strain to see it as more than an over-aestheticized, interesting failure. The script, by Frank Davis and Renoir, was adapted from Mitchell Wilson's novel "None So Blind."—P.K. (Museum of Modern Art; June 3.)

British Reserve

Gieves & Hawkes: Understated Elegance for the Sterling Father



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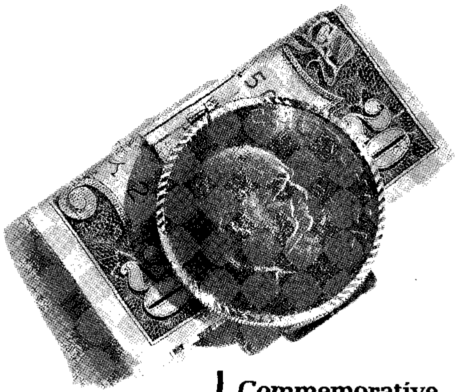

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THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

Notes and Comment

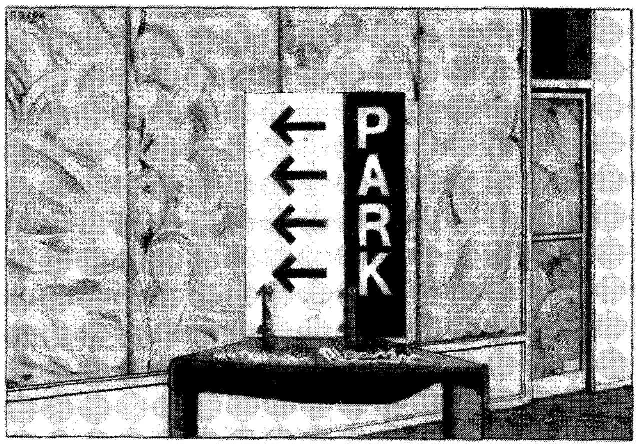
THREE months after United States Marines liberated Kuwait City, the victors of Operation Desert Storm are still being honored across the country. By July 4th, which President Bush has declared a special day to honor the troops, the ceremonies will have lasted twice as long as the hostilities. During these months, the war has become domesticated; Desert Storm seems now to have had less to do with Kuwait or Iraq than with America's resurgence—how Americans "kicked the Vietnam syndrome once and for all," in President Bush's phrase, and learned to pull together once again. Meanwhile, the real aftermath of the war—its effects on Iraq and Kuwait and other parts of the Middle East—has steadily receded from our view. On the day when judges in Kuwait City sentenced a young Iraqi man to fifteen years in prison for wearing a Saddam Hussein T-shirt, Hollywood was congratulating the victorious American troops and parading an M-1 Abrams tank and a Patriot missile alongside Roseanne Barr and Jimmy Stewart.

The war—or, rather, the victory—gained the President enormous popularity, and for most of the country the entire event has become an occasion for patriotic good feeling. Desert Storm has been reduced to a single, simple plot line, acted out by a few stock characters: the mad dictator, the resolute President, the heroic soldiers, the grateful citizenry. Details—the former intimate relations between the United States and Saddam Hussein's Iraq, for example—remain unexplored. Congress, which might have been expected to investigate the dubious American diplomacy that preceded Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, largely abdicated its responsibility in the face of Desert Storm's high ratings. The roots of the war—why it actually happened—now attract the interest only of specialists and spoilsports.

Unfortunately, the muddled world out of which the Gulf crisis sprang last summer has gained little in clarity since the Marines marched into Kuwait City. United States policy in the Gulf has not fundamentally changed: its goal is to maintain at all costs "a secure and stable Gulf" (in Mr. Bush's phrase), in order to shelter the fragile, oil-producing, conservative Sunni regimes of the Arabian peninsula. That goal led President Nixon to anoint the Shah of Iran America's "policeman of the Gulf," and, after the Shah was overthrown, it drove Presidents Reagan and Bush to support Saddam Hussein's Iraq, which they saw as a bulwark against the ideological threat posed by the Ayatollah Khomeini and by the possibility that his Shiite revolution might spread through the Gulf. That same goal subsequently led President Bush to stand politely aside while Saddam Hussein—whom he had denounced as worse than Hitler—crushed the Shiite and Kurdish uprisings in his country.

On March 6th, a week after the ceasefire, the six Gulf states met in Damascus with Syria and Egypt and issued a call for "a new Arab order to boost joint Arab action." The essence of the new order was a plan to maintain Egyptian and Syrian troops "in the Saudi territories and other Arab countries in the Gulf," so as to "guarantee the security and peace of Arab countries in the Gulf region." The presence of Egyptians and Syrians, it was hoped, would eliminate any need for substantial American forces, with the political damage that their continued presence would entail. More important, the structure of the new Arab order—with Egypt and Syria sending troops to the Gulf, and the Gulf countries sending some of their wealth to Cairo and Damascus—might help to bridge the most dangerous fault line in the Arab world: that between the overpopulated, impoverished nations of the north and the underpopulated, oil-rich nations of the south. (Iraq, the source of the region's most recent upheaval, stands astride this fault line—as well as that between the Sunnis and the Shiites—and it's no accident that Saddam Hussein, after invading Kuwait, hoped to attract Arab sympathies by pointing to this basic inequality as his reason for doing so; he was very well aware that the fabulous wealth of the Gulf states and the greed and arrogance perceived as accompanying it engender great resentment in the rest of the Arab world.)

On May 8th, however, President Mubarak announced that he was pulling Egyptian troops out of the Gulf. The decision, Egyptian political and military officials told the Washington *Post*, reflected "Egypt's im-



patience with Saudi and Kuwaiti foot-dragging." Now that the war was over, the Gulf states were not so eager to play host to their Arab brothers from the north, and were still less eager to pay for their presence. Besides, a Gulf diplomat was quoted in the *Post* as saying, "who's going to attack you if they know the United States will come and protect you?" The Gulf states, an Arab journalist said in the same story, "want blue-eyed soldiers to protect them." The comment recalls that of a "senior Gulf official" quoted in the *Wall Street Journal* just before the war began. "You think I want to send my teen-aged son to die for Kuwait?" he asked, then chuckled. "We have our white slaves from America to do that."

Increasingly, the victory of Desert Storm seems to be leading not so much to a secure and stable Gulf as to an Americanized one. While twelve thousand American troops protect the Kurds in Saddam's Iraq, and five thousand work to keep the Emir's Kuwait functioning, American officials have begun murmuring about establishing a new United States base in Bahrain, about a "prepositioning" of equipment in Saudi Arabia and elsewhere, about regular "joint exercises" involving American troops in the Arabian desert. But many of the threats to "stability" in the Gulf hinge on the weaknesses of the rigid, undemocratic regimes there, and regular visits from the United States Marines, far from removing those threats, might well heighten them. And for the United States, barely a year after the end of the Cold War seemed to offer the promise of a reduced military budget and a greater attention to domestic problems, the Gulf War has brought a greater burden abroad and the strong likelihood of further entanglements in the Middle East. Beyond the parades and the celebrations of national self-renewal, this is the real legacy of Desert Storm.

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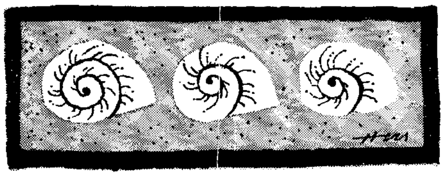
Kentucky Spring

A FRIEND writes:

I've moved back to Kentucky after more than two decades in the Northeast, during which time I didn't pay much attention to Kentucky politics. But now we're having a hot race for governor, and the primary is upon us. Trying to make sense of it all is a little like wandering through the thrill-rides section of a county fair and wondering which whirligig looks safest.

Kentucky is traditionally a Democratic state, so the Republican primary—which is the first real one in twenty-four years, and consists of a contest between a couple of guys named Larry—is pretty quiet. The wild stuff is going on among the Democrats. Governor Wallace Wilkinson spent a good deal of energy during his term trying to get the law changed to let him succeed himself, but he failed, so his wife, Martha, trotted forth to claim the office. Wilkinson posters blossomed all over the state, with the First Lady's picture where the Governor's might have gone. Martha ran on Wallace's record, but his administration has been so scandal-ridden that she also had to run as a reformer. It was an odd contradiction, especially since one of the scandals involved her own campaign financing.

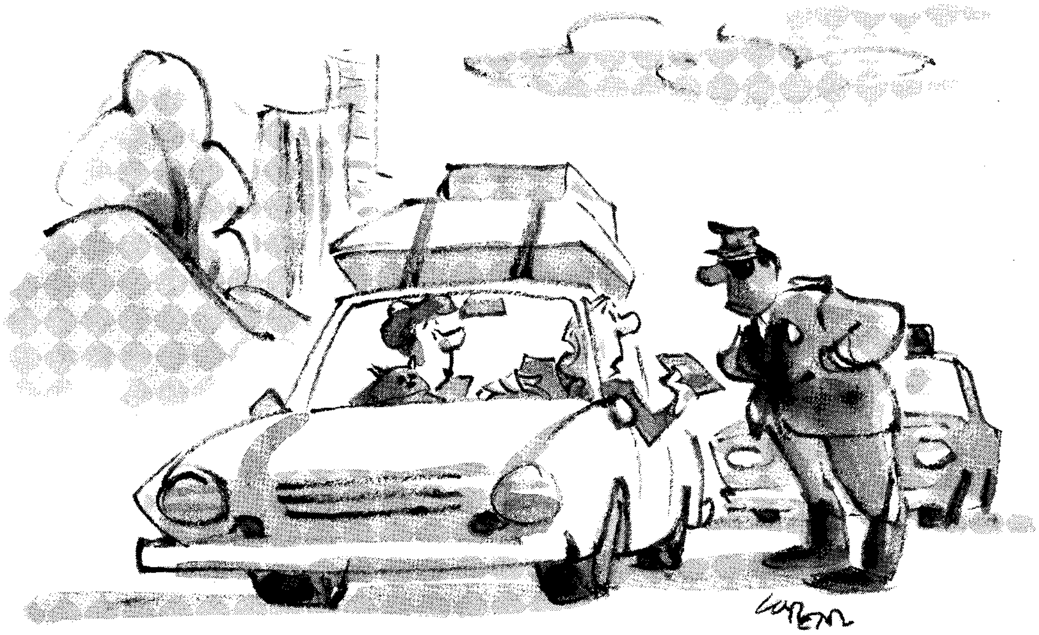
Martha's simultaneous dependence on and independence from the Governor must have been as bewildering to her as it was to the rest of us, for not long ago she dropped out of the race, clearing the field for four remaining contenders: Lieutenant Governor Brereton Jones, who has carried on a years-long front-page feud with the Gov; Gatewood Galbraith, a Lexington attorney with sleepy-looking eyes, who is running on a pro-pot platform; Scotty Baesler, the mayor of Lexington, and the only candidate in the bunch who wants to prevent the public from arming itself with assault rifles; and Dr. Floyd G. Poore. Dr. Poore's slogan is "He's one of us," even though, in a moment of disconcertingly high-toned backspin, he added the "Doctor" to his name legally. Though he hasn't practiced medicine for years, Dr. Poore is far from poor; the Governor is a multimillionaire; the Lieutenant Governor owns a horse farm; Scotty Baesler is a rich landowner. The Kentucky gubernatorial race is more expensive than all but a very few other such races, and most of its politicians have money coming out of their ears—except, evidently, Gatewood Galbraith, the guy who envisions a little plot of grass in everybody's back yard. I tried to phone his headquarters recently to ask a few questions about the candidate's platform, but the headquarters didn't have a phone.



According to press accounts, Gatewood Galbraith plans to solve Kentucky's economic woes by legalizing hemp, a.k.a. marijuana, which is probably the largest cash crop in the state. (Tobacco, of course, is king here, although some Kentucky school districts recently banned smoking in their high schools. Everybody running for office is naturally in favor of good health for the commonwealth, but no politician will say boo to the tobacco industry.) In the Second World War, Kentucky grew hemp to make rope, and hemp still grows wild in places, and also in cornfields and in carefully tended plots hidden in the hills. Galbraith claims that we can run our cars with hemp oil. He is full of creative ideas about how we can use hemp: in cooking oil, paper, building material, paints and varnishes, textiles, and medicine. He also says it makes a tasty dough. Gatewood Galbraith, who recently held a Gate-Woodstock Festival on a big farm, with twenty-two assorted bands, says one of the first things he'll do in office is ground the military and state-police helicopters that patrol for marijuana.

Those choppers come right over our house regularly. When my husband and I moved here, we received an official-looking notice informing us that we could lose our property if any marijuana was ever found on it, even if we didn't know that the marijuana was there. So we've been on our toes. Apparently, it's easy to get in trouble around here. This winter, the state agriculture commissioner was jailed for paying a salary to someone not on his payroll, and he quit to keep from being impeached. A lot of sheriffs around the state are in jail. One ran his office for a while from his cell. Another was indicted for theft and jury tampering. A city attorney was picked up this spring for D.U.I. and possession of cocaine. And now the state's attorney general, Fred Cowan, who is running for lieutenant governor, seems to have shot himself in the foot: two weeks ago, he had to withdraw from his investigation of the Martha Wilkinson campaign-finances scandal, because (in a strongly worded personal note) he had solicited a contribution for his own campaign from a defendant his office had subpoenaed four days earlier.

Kentucky is marching toward its bicentennial next year, and I hope we get some of these matters cleared up. I hate for our state to look bad. Actually, it would be hard for it to *look* bad, as long as the government refrains from selling it down the drain. The countryside here is lovely, and we've had a perfect spring. All those years in the North, I longed for a Kentucky springtime—especially when it snowed on my birthday, May 1st. A Kentucky spring starts in January or February, and develops very slowly. The leaves and flowers don't pop open overnight, the way they do up there. They take their time. The languid, slow spring saunters along through March and April until the whole state is finally dancing with redbuds and dogwoods, all through the forests and along the parkways.



"I'm afraid I wasn't watching my speed, Officer—we're fleeing from New York."

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Beaver Works

PEOPLE tend to think of beavers as fat, silly-looking animals with great big buckteeth and flat-as-a-pancake tails who chop down trees just for the fun of it and dam up good trout streams. But most people who live in cities or suburbs have never seen a beaver—not in a park, not in a zoo, not in their own back yards. The closest you can get to a beaver in New York City is in the subway station at Astor Place, where the decorative tiles feature beavers: the beavers that turned John Jacob Astor into a millionaire. The beaver is now the state animal of New York and the national animal of Canada—not because New Yorkers and Canadians really love and admire beavers but because beavers once made some New Yorkers and some Canadians big piles of money. The New York Public Library, which Astor helped to found, was practically built out of beavers.

Giant beavers once roamed the earth: prehistoric beavers weighed seven or eight hundred pounds and were the largest rodents in the history of the world. Beavers are still one of the largest rodents, but they've trimmed down to about sixty pounds. Beavers used to be up and about during the day—early Indians described them as basking in the sun—but now, after coming close to a wipeout, they are nocturnal. It is estimated that before the arrival of the trapper there were some sixty million beavers living in North America; that's more beavers than the human populations of Boston, Washington, Los Angeles, and New York combined. By the late eighteen-hundreds, most of those beavers had been transformed into robes and blankets and gentlemen's top hats, and there were no beavers left in New Jersey or in thirteen other states. By 1895, only five survived in New York, holed up in the most remote and inaccessible regions of the Adirondacks, and Hope Ryden, the author of the recent book "Lily Pond: Four Years with a Family of Beavers," says that "their whereabouts was kept a secret." But the beaver is a hard animal to keep down. In the nineteen-twenties, game wardens in the Adirondacks imported a few beavers from Yellowstone; they fanned out across the state and flourished so spectacularly that they were soon driving people crazy—flooding drainage and irrigation ditches, and felling trees. Trapping began again, and to some extent it continues to this day—a state of affairs that irritates a group of people who feel that the beaver has had enough trouble from the likes of us. They call themselves the Beaver Defenders.

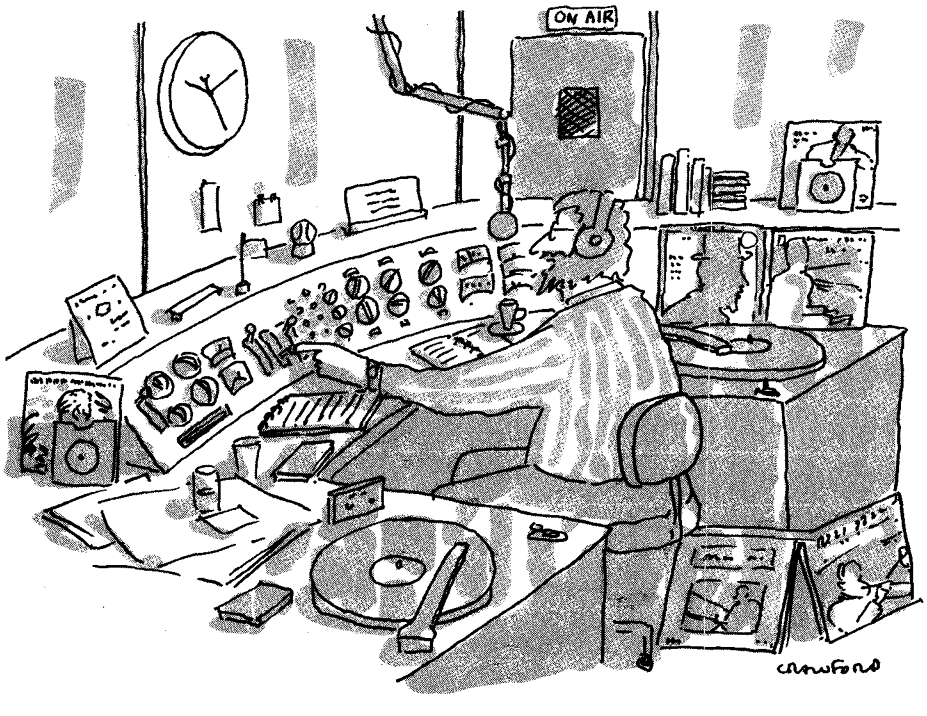
Hope Buyukmihci, who founded the Beaver Defenders, in 1970, started defending beavers in the nineteen-sixties, after she and her husband scraped together enough money to buy eighty-five acres of swampland in an area of the New Jersey Pine Barrens called Piney Hollow, about halfway between Philadelphia and Atlantic City. They named their land Unexpected Wildlife Refuge, after Unexpected Road, which led to it, but their dream of establishing a safe haven for the ducks and otters and deer and other creatures that lived there was disturbed by hunters and poachers. After Hope found a neighbor checking a leg-hold trap he'd set in her stream right next to a beaver dam, she realized that people didn't have an ounce of mercy for beavers, because they didn't know the first thing about them.

She herself had spent a great deal of time getting to know her beavers. Once she had found beaver sign—tracks and peeled sticks—on her property, she walked out every night to the dam and waited. She took the beavers poplar branches, a special treat. After several months, the beavers began to show themselves, and finally they would swim right up to her and take poplar from her hand. Hope still keeps an eye on the current beavers' dam-building activity, but she is also busy maintaining trails through the bogs; checking several hundred bird-nesting boxes around Unexpected Pond and along the trails; patrolling the borders of the refuge—now four hundred and fifty acres—to make sure that hunters haven't damaged fences; and feeding flocks of Canada geese and Muscovy ducks that come rushing over to the shore whenever they catch sight of her. Nevertheless, her affection for beavers is hard to miss. There's a beaver decal on the door of her pickup truck and a beaver carved in the door of her outhouse. Inside her cabin, the walls are covered with photographs and art work featuring favorite beavers, including a stained-glass beaver in one window with the name Chopper set in green glass underneath—a memorial to a friendly young beaver who was killed by a fisherman.

Hope Buyukmihci's greatest gift to the beaver is undoubtedly the fight she and the Beaver Defenders led for the passage of a New Jersey bill outlawing steel-jaw leg-hold traps. It was signed into law by Governor Thomas Kean in 1984. She has also preserved for posterity some extraordinary beaver stories, in a book she wrote with a woman who may have known beavers better than anyone else, before or since—Dorothy Richards. Entitled "Beaversprite," after the name of a sanctuary that Richards founded, the book begins, "I'm writing this with a sixty-pound beaver on my lap."

During the Depression, Dorothy Richards and her husband bought a broken-down old farmhouse in the foothills of the Adirondacks. There were two streams on the land, and a friend of the Richardses' who worked for the Department of Environmental Conservation in Albany asked if they'd like a couple of beavers imported from Pennsylvania, part of a project to restore the animal in New York State. They agreed, and Dorothy, although she was initially impressed only by the beavers' great size, grew so astounded by the dam they constructed that she soon found herself visiting it every night, hoping to see them at work. When the beavers became aware of her presence, they dived, and slapped the water with their tails—a sound so loud that it has been compared to gunfire—but the pair gradually grew used to her. She named them Samson and Delilah. In the book she recalls what her husband said to her on the summer night when he first saw Samson: "He walked out of the brush like a man out of his house. He stood on two feet and was stuffing thorn apples into his mouth with one hand while holding more in the other. They're not paws—they're *hands!*"

What comes across in all writing about beavers—including that of the naturalist Leonard Lee Rue III, who found beavers so fascinating that he almost drowned trying to wedge himself into a beaver lodge—is that beavers aren't merely *like* people; they're really better. The beaver is the animal who, aside from man, wreaks the most physical change on the environment, but, unlike that other busy species, the beaver thins trees, controls erosion, keeps the water table high, and—far more than Smokey the Bear—prevents forest fires. Beavers have built dams four thousand feet long and have dredged canals of over seven hundred feet, and for aeons they have lived all winter in close quarters without quarrelling. The Blackfeet of Montana used to pray to the beaver for wisdom and cunning, because, like anyone who knows anything about beavers, they knew who really created the world.



"Ray Brown on bass, Elvin Jones on drums, and Alan Greenspan on interest rates."

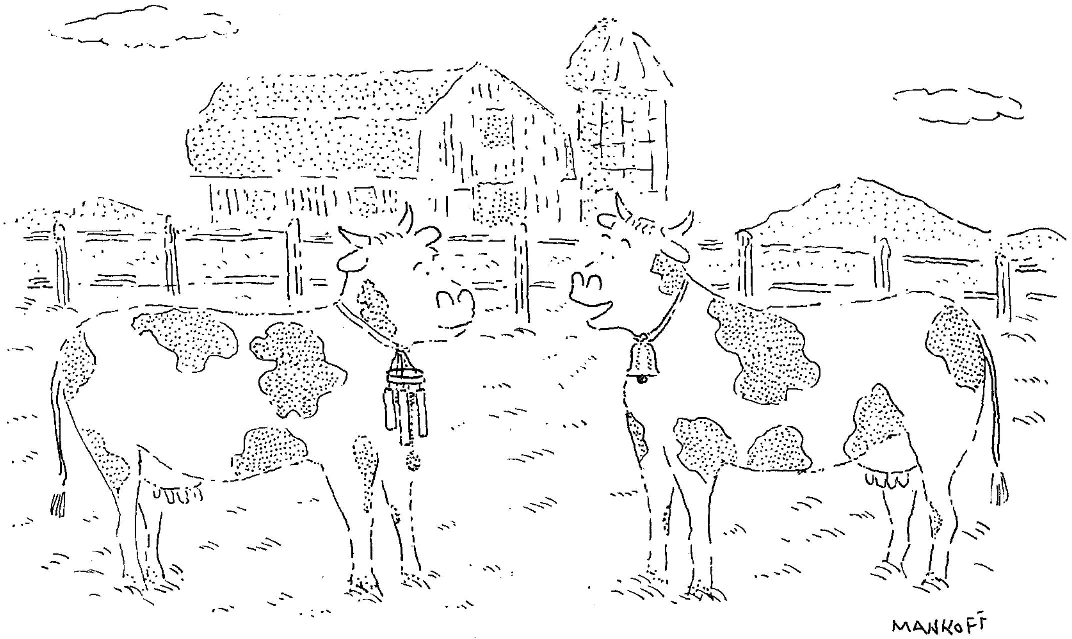
The Guy Who Dares This

WE have noticed with some horror that there was a Queen Elizabeth Look-Alike Contest in Miami recently. This was, surely, a misguided attempt to find an original way of welcoming Her Britannic Majesty to America. And all the time, as we happen to know, there was Gerd Verschoor, proved monarch-pleaser, available to do the job. Gerd is a Dutch performance artist who lives in New York but is currently preparing an earth-art piece at Pyramid Lake, Nevada. In 1985, he presented Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands with a bouquet of plastic flowers. It was a big hit with the Queen. "She says, 'The guy who dares this, I want to meet.' So I had a meeting for one half an hour with the Queen," Gerd Verschoor told us.

We asked Gerd to tell us more about his meeting with Queen Beatrix.

"She was wearing a fabric with printed flowers on it," he recalled. "She said, 'Why did you want to make this bouquet for me?' 'Majesty, a more beautiful bouquet than what you're wearing I couldn't make,' I said. Then I said, 'You carry tiny Biedermeier bouquets—it doesn't go. You have so much power.' The Queen is a strong woman. I like her very much."

Here we are, standing on the sidewalk, along with about two hundred other guests, eating spicy walnuts off banana leaves, and watching Gerd perform in the windows of Barneys Seventh Avenue. He is creating a landscape, as the invitation said he would.



"Oooh, wind chimes—how New Age."

• •

He carries a small knife. He's going from window to window, making changes in the décor of his garden. Right now, he is pushing one of the tumbleweeds along into a new position. But wait. He has picked up a big philodendron leaf, slowly, carefully, and he is moving it. Now he's scattering long-stemmed carnations here and there. For a second, he is violent with a long-stemmed white carnation. We have to walk back and forth from one end of the windows—there are five—to the other to see what Gerd is doing. We have to walk very quickly to keep up with his changing moods. "He is flitting around like a bee," a woman says.

Now Gerd is slicing off pieces of a pandanus palm. Pandanus palms have yellow centers. He bends the pieces nearly in half and puts them in a new place. Look at him now: he is hacking off the bottom of a long green thing, and he is carrying off another philodendron leaf, putting it in a new position. Gerd goes to extremes. Sometimes he is gentle with the white carnations, sometimes the reverse.

Gerd is running now. Why? Some of the philodendron leaves are standing up. On the sidewalk, young men are serving pretty drinks on silver trays. Is this a recession-proof occupation, we wonder. There is a watermelon drink with a sliver of lime. There is also a pale-yellow drink with crushed ice, and a white drink with a South American name.

Now Gerd is violent again with the carnations. He throws them around ruthlessly. We go back for more spicy walnuts, but we find that they have disappeared for good. Instead, we talk to a well-dressed woman, and ask her what has drawn her to this display. "I enjoy looking at Europeans," she says.

And now Gerd—fickle, fickle Gerd—is caressing several carnations. He holds them in his arms. They are his babies! He puts them down at his feet. Then he buries them in a mixture of tree bark (we are almost certain it is tree bark) and sawdust. But not completely.

We have not exhausted the drink list. There is another drink: lime and mango.

It was a while after this that we talked to Gerd. In our mind, the drinks, life on the sidewalk, and what Gerd had been doing racing around in Barneys' windows were all jumbled together. We resolved to straighten some things out. We were direct. "What is it that is going on in those windows, really?" we asked.

"The cycle of life we have to deal with," he said.

"Where are you from?"

"From Maastricht. It's the oldest city in Holland. The most beautiful city. It's five minutes from the Belgian border."

"What do you think about people throwing flowers away?"

"When they don't like them anymore, they throw them away. They throw them in a dumpster. I pick up these things." Gerd added that he did not see why people express their feeling with flowers to the exclusion of other things in the natural world. "If you have a beautiful day at the beach, why not bring the sand home from the beach and put it on the table?" he asked us.

"Why did you come to America?" we asked him.

"I came to America to get recognition for my work. It takes so long to know how they think here. But they give you a chance."

"How would you describe Americans?" we asked.

"They are very in one direction," he said. "Status is very important. And money."

"How did you grow up in Holland?" we asked.

"Strict Catholic. Contemporary art was not possible. I went to floral school. It takes four years to become a florist." Even when he was very young, however, he liked non-flowers, Gerd said. As a thirteen-year-old, he saw cowboy movies, and what he noticed was the tumbleweed. "The tumbleweed was so fascinating that I never could forget about it," he said. "So I went to search for tumbleweed and I found it. In El Paso. I drove to Texas in a truck and loaded it with tumbleweed. Cowboys aren't on horses anymore. They're on trucks. I was so disappointed."

"How do you feel about carnations?"

"Everybody hates carnations. Nobody loves carnations anymore. The carnations can't help it."

"That's why you buried them in your act?"

"Yes."

"Do you still like flowers?"

"I don't dare to cut them anymore. I don't dare to arrange them."

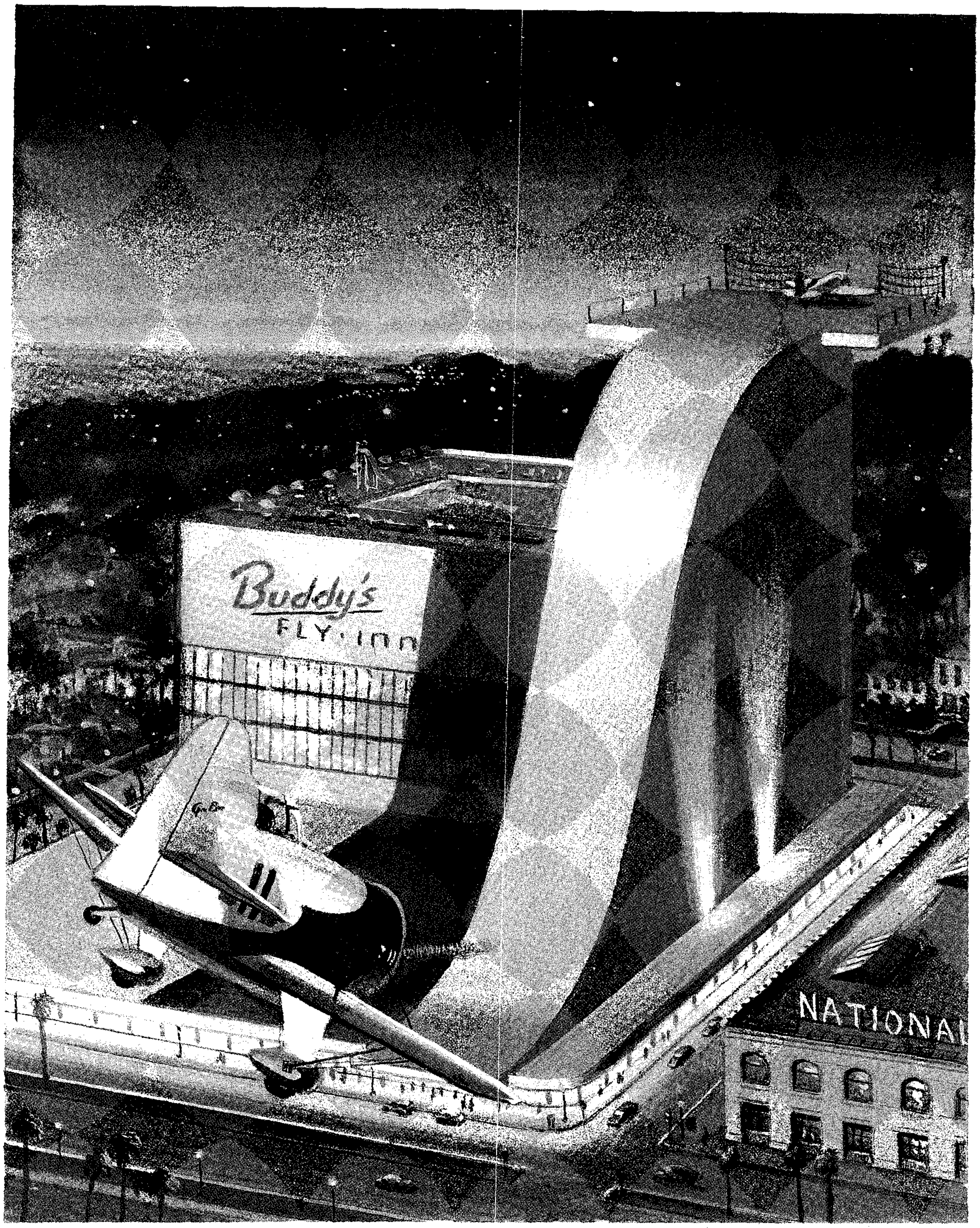
"What else do you like to do in life?"

"I'm a very normal person, actually."

"But what else do you like to do?"

"Smoke cigarettes. I need eight cups of coffee and ten cigarettes in the morning, and then I'm awake. It's my favorite part of the day."

LOS ANGELES, ONCE UPON A TIME



Buddy's Fly-Inn, 1934

Jimmy Doolittle would zoom in for supper straight from the Pomona air races in that nasty little Gee Bee thing, and he never throttled back until the ship had run right up to the very top, whereupon he'd cut the motor and roll to a stop as easy as if he were parking a Buick. Jimmy wouldn't go in with Buddy on making a national Fly-Inn chain, but, you know, it had nothing to do with zoning problems or financing. The fact is that Buddy's kitchen—well, everything had that benzine flavor to it, everything tasted kind of smoked in an unpleasant way. And Jimmy Doolittle, if you knew him, he was a fellow who liked his eats.

—Bruce McCall

MORE SONGS ABOUT THE TITANIC

THE summer that Judy Vantassel and I were friends for the last time, she had been forced out of her communal house in Boston by the faulty lubrication of two-stroke engines. Before she moved back to her parents' house, she had lived for five years in that all-Saab household at the edge of Roxbury. But now all the engines of all the three-cylinder Saabs had finally blown up. The driveway was left empty of its usual powder-blue exhaust. The lease on the house had been abandoned, because the people sharing the rent there were afraid that if they walked home alone from the Orange Line station they would be set on fire.

When I first knew Judy, in high school, our relationship consisted of going to her house and getting stoned and then tickling each other. After we got tired from tickling, I would lie back on her canopy bed, light a cigarette, and blow smoke up toward the canopy.

Later, when we went to college at opposite ends of the Boston area, I noticed for the first time how pretty she was. She had taken up the fashion of wearing clothes from the Salvation Army thrift shop. Framed by her straight blond hair, her face was a tidy, calm center in the whirl of her mismatched patterns.

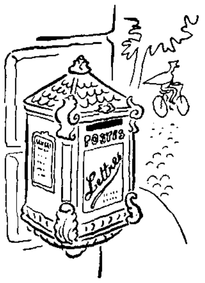
After we had both graduated, when I lived in a shared house in Sloatsburg, New York, and Judy had moved into the Boston household with all the other Saab drivers, we got together every few weeks, as often as the health of our old cars permitted. But by then I was beginning to sense that there was something nasty about Boston, with the chill that hung over its deserted sidewalks at night and the People's Strike Force posters glued to every garbage can. I thought even my car could feel it; we still believed in those days that Volkswagens were organic. Every time I drove into that city, something would go wrong: a new howl from the front wheel bearings or an ominous ticking in the clutch, usually beginning near those oil tanks decorated with bright splashes of primary colors in which we thought we could make out the silhouette of Ho Chi Minh.

After Judy's Roxbury household had collapsed, and I had gotten tired in my own house of trying to portion out the phone bill, penny by penny, with people I barely knew, we both found ourselves living back in our parents' houses in New Jersey. It wasn't a bad arrangement for me; since I had no curfew, and my own wages and transportation, my parents and I found ourselves, for the first time in our lives, living together with nothing to argue about.

Every Sunday, Judy and I went to the movies and then to dinner, and then we usually sat on the porch of her house smoking pot. I was glad Judy was around; I had been working so many hours trying to pay off my student loans before I could dare to take on any others for graduate school that I hadn't allowed myself much of a social life.

But Judy didn't look the same. Or maybe the problem was that she did look the same, but the same look didn't mean the same thing. Plaid shirts that had been sloppy and sexy a few years ago were now just sloppy. Her hair hung as straight as it always had, but what had once been sleek now seemed merely inert.

She had gained weight, with all the excess collecting below the waist. She emphasized her bottom-heaviness by wearing loose corduroy slacks, even to the best restaurants. And she usually wore a cardigan sweater that zipped down the front, and a dark bandanna tied around her hair in the familiar Central European style.



MY job that summer was running the service bar at the Ramapo Hills Manor. It was a fully equipped bar, but inside the kitchen, so I saw only the waitresses and the kitchen help. My favorite waitress was a girl named Tracy. When she came to my service counter, I would make a point of mixing her drinks as deftly as I could, showing off how quick I was with my spouting bottles.

Coming back from dinner one night, Judy and I stopped to smoke a joint at one of the turnoffs leading to Redbranch Lake, which was on the way to her parents' house.

"You know," Judy said, "I really think we should talk about whether or not we're going to sleep together."

We were sitting in my Volkswagen, at the end of a paved turnaround overlooking the north end of the lake—the part that was beginning to get so clogged with weeds and muck that people were saying it would be possible in a few years to walk across it.

It was odd to hear her say something so personal in such a businesslike manner, even though she had told me earlier how she learned in her Mutual Support Counselling group to formulate a clear idea of what she wanted and then take logical steps to get it. I said I was worried that if we slept together after all those years I might have trouble functioning, which might make it awkward for us to remain friends at all.

I couldn't tell her the truth, even though she might have known it on some level. I didn't want to sleep with her, partly because she carried with her the effluvium of my least favorite city in America, and partly because she seemed to have chosen to make herself unattractive, rather than coming by her looks naturally. What I did say was tactful, I think; by making it seem to be *my* problem I allowed her to accept my excuse without feeling upset about herself. I had been going to an Ego Awareness Therapy group—EAT, as we called it—which taught me that it was important to have a clear emotional picture of the other side of any interaction.

There was something else that made me uncomfortable. Around the time she had discovered Mutual Support Counselling, she had also become a devotee of archaic folk ballads. Now she sang her old-timey tunes at every possible chance, and I didn't have the nerve to tell her that such songs became obsolete for a reason. Sometimes in the car, in the middle of a conversation, Judy would launch into one of her hundreds of memorized ballads, in her clear but not very expressive voice, and I would have to listen to it all the way through.

When we went hiking in the woods around Redbranch Lake she would stop in the middle of the path without saying a word and start singing something like "Lead Me to My Sweetheart's Grave," or "The West Virginia Steamboat Tragedy," and I would have to stand still and wait for her to finish. It would go on for verses and verses. At the end of each verse I would lean forward slightly, hoping for the song to be over.

People in show business know that the hardest thing in the world is to be sung to. If you've ever seen the famous clip of Nelson Eddy and Jeanette MacDonald singing "Indian Love Call" you must have noticed that the real performance is by Jeanette MacDonald, in the moments when he sings to her and she responds to each of his notes with a different shading of her smile. In real life it's much more difficult, especially if you don't like the song. It's hard to decide where to look, or what kind of expression to have on your face.

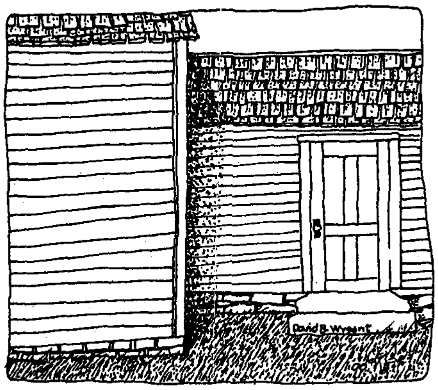
Once Judy took me up to a little town outside of Kingston, New York, to see a group of her old Boston friends who were experts at something called "contra dancing," which looked exactly like square dancing, but without the string ties. Everybody but me was very good at it. In their jeans and plaid flannel shirts, they two-stepped and promenaded, solidly supported by their heavy yellow work boots. The P.A. system that the band was using wasn't powerful enough to fill the space of the town hall, where they had moved from their former location in a church basement, so that when the two lines of dancers charged toward each other their Goodyear welted soles drummed so loudly on the wooden floor that the mandolins and guitars were drowned out.

All the way home on the Thruway, over the low drone of my Volkswagen, Judy sang her old-fashioned songs: "My Johnny on the Gallows," "Ballad of the Broken Canoe," "A Golden Bullet for My Breast." I looked ahead, kept my eyes on the road, and didn't say anything. Sometimes between songs I was tempted to turn the radio on, but that would have been cruel. She was my friend, after all, even if I didn't like her very much.

I suppose if I'd tried harder I probably could have made myself like her more, but I don't know if it would have done either of us any good. The time she wanted to discuss whether it would be the intelligent thing for us to sleep together, I had actually thought about it later that night. If I could have kept imagining the smile and the voice and the white uniform of my favorite waitress, maybe things could have worked out.

ONE Sunday in August, after I had finished tending bar for an afternoon wedding reception, Judy and I went to see a double feature that included a rerelease of "The Poseidon Adventure." We had made a reservation for dinner afterward at the Warwick Inn, so I brought a jacket and tie and put them on in the employee restroom on my way out. Even Judy had dressed up, with a bright-yellow bandanna around her hair, khaki slacks instead of corduroy, and a cardigan that buttoned instead of zipped.

It turned out that both movies starred Ernest Borgnine. We agreed that one Ernest Borgnine film a night was enough, and left as the second movie was beginning.



Our table at the Warwick Inn wouldn't be ready for an hour and a half, so we cancelled the reservation and went to look for another place to eat. I drove, she sang. I would have kept driving and looked for someplace nice, but it had been a long day—trouble with the ice machine, people complaining that I wasn't making the whiskey sours strong enough—and I just didn't want to hear any more songs about train disasters and jilted lovers stabbing themselves. We ended up in the town of Chester, New York, at a restaurant called the Spindletop Kitchen—one of those reconditioned diners that have about two hundred items on the menu.

Our waitress was in her thirties, attractive, but with the frazzled look of a heavy smoker. Her brass-colored hair hung in a sort of elevated ponytail, which would have been very sexy on someone ten years younger. After she had come around a second time to see if we had finished reading our menus, Judy said, "She looks like she wants a man so much that she scares them all away."

"I don't know," I said. "I kind of like that type."

Judy lowered her head to the columns and columns of dinner combinations. I could see that I had hurt her feelings.

I tried to soften the remark: "I guess

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METAPHYSICAL

Yes, I thought this to be everlasting,
no not waking up, no break of day
not blazing forward out of due east:
blue skies or gray, rain or shine.
I heard the recognized voices
rise attached to the scents of breakfast
to call me down to the new day.
I lived on the coast, tidal, scented
by the submerged inhabiting the shore. Bones
of the no longer swimming, flesh of darkness
de-shelled, isolated, laid out. The rotting
and the called back, what we call ebb and flow.
It's preserving the continuation of flow that keeps us
awake during the hours of darkness, afloat,
buoyant till come-what-may, isn't that it?—
what's merely ongoing, nothing more abstract.
We weep unnerved for what doesn't blink awake.
Oh yes, how the world rises before us
and goes by.

—DANIEL HALPERN

I've always had a thing about waitresses."

That was true. Earlier that day, in the slow period between courses in the wedding banquet, I had asked Tracy if she wanted to go out with me. I suggested the opera because she had told me earlier that her mother was a soprano with the Metropolitan Opera company. Tracy said no, that she was engaged to some guy who went to New Paltz with her; then she gave me a big hug across the counter, next to my tip jar, where the waitresses were supposed to put ten per cent of what they got.

Judy sat silently across from me in the booth, her menu closed, her finger inserted between two pages like a bookmark. Earlier, she had been making jokes about our being dressed up in such a tacky place; now she just stared out the window at the traffic going by on the Quickway, her lower lip pushed out to show the wet skin underneath.

Before I took her home, we sat in the Volkswagen, looking out over Redbranch Lake. It was a different turnaround from the one we usually went to; this one was like a dead-end driveway, with a row of sawed-off telephone poles forming a fence to keep cars from rolling over the edge.

Judy began to tell me how worried she was about her sister Karen. Karen worked for Goodwill Industries in Queens, and apparently wasn't taking very good care of herself. A few weeks before, she had cut herself on a staple from a carton of recycled sweaters and had let the wound get infected.

The lights from the other side of the lake, where I had never been, made long, blurry streaks across the water. I could hear Judy's voice moving up into a higher register: "She's been going to this group, but all she ever says to me is how stupid they all are, as if she wants to prove she's more depressed than they are." Every time I said something like "Uh-huh," or "Oh, really," my voice sounded comically low.

"She called me up on the phone in the middle of the night," Judy said, "and she just started apologizing and apologizing for everything she ever did to me when we were kids." She was beginning to draw breath in short spasms.

"The thing is," she said, her voice quavering, "she doesn't seem to *care* anymore. I'm afraid she's going to commit suicide!"

She burst into tears, resting her head on my shoulder for a moment and sobbing. I said nothing, just sat looking out over the lake. A generation ago, when it was more common for people to cry on each other's shoulders in cars, such a moment could have been romantic—even cinematic, with the lights the way they were across the water, and the thick, leafy August smell coming in through the wind vents.

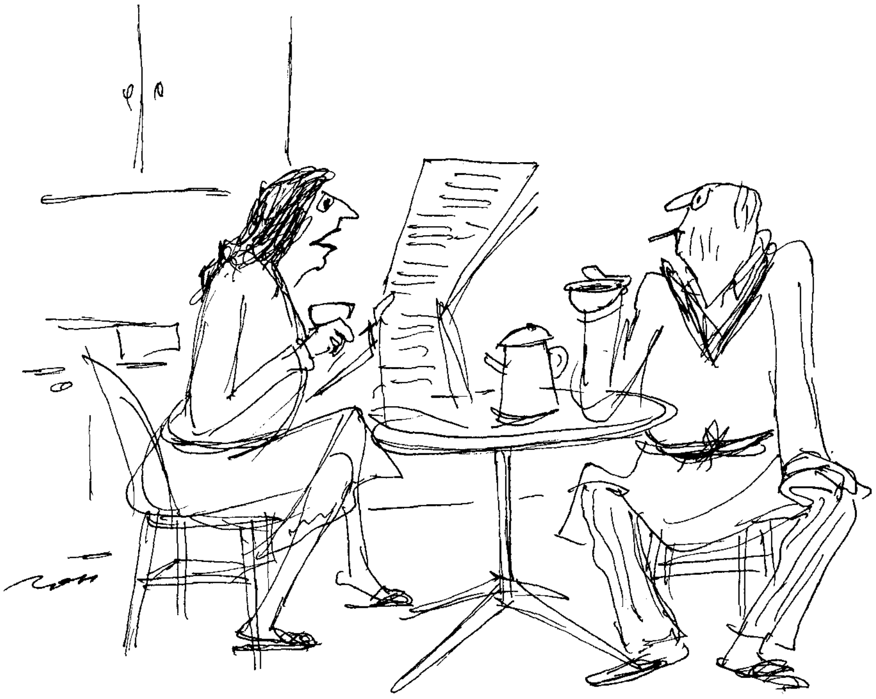
But I find it almost as awkward to be cried to as to be sung to. I kept a blank but sympathetic expression on my face and looked straight ahead into the windshield, out over the lake. It's not that I didn't care, just that I had nothing intelligent to say, except "You should get her to see a real doctor."

Today, of course, I would know better, thanks to the many specials they show on television every time there is an epidemic of teen-age suicide. I would ask her if Karen had given away her possessions, if she seemed to be tying up loose ends and settling accounts with people.

The wind picked up around the closed car. The bright streaks on the water dimmed and brightened as the lights on the other side of the lake were obscured and then uncovered by the blowing branches. It might seem strange for somebody to cry that much over something that hadn't happened, but I understood the principle. Judy had explained to me that one of the main techniques of Mutual Support Counselling, or M.S.C., as she called it, was to "release" negative energy by forcing yourself to cry.

But even though I understood the "releasing" process, after five minutes it became impossible for me to keep worrying about whether or not her sister was going to kill herself. I soon found myself thinking about something else entirely, doing a rudimentary form of arithmetic about how busy the Ramapo Hills Manor had been lately and all the overtime and extra tips I was making. I was hoping to take Judy home early, because I had to get up the next morning to help set up for a big Rotary luncheon.

By this point in the summer, living at home and giving my parents fifty dollars a month for room and board, I had already paid off a quarter of my student-loan debt, and had saved enough money for a down payment on a new car. We were sitting in what would be my last Volkswagen. In fact, if I



"Listen to this: 'Extensive research has recently been completed which proves there are *other businesses just like show business.'"*

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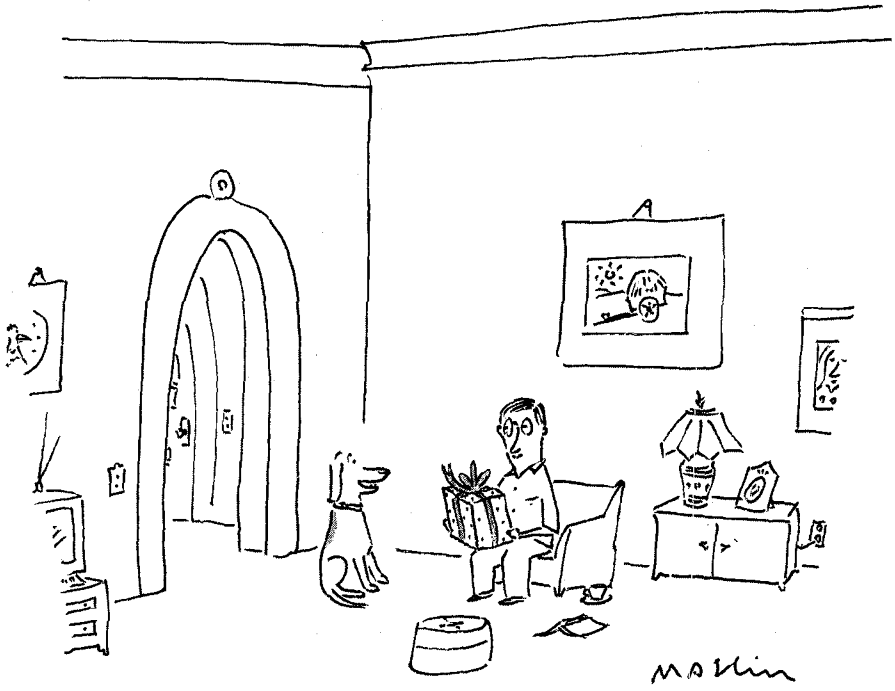


"It's just my way of saying 'Bowwow.'"

hadn't been asked to come in to work so early the next day, I would have planned to spend the morning cleaning and waxing and vacuuming the old car in preparation for its appraisal, as all the books tell you to do.

It is remarkable how many important events can be telescoped into the space of a few days. One of the reasons I was feeling more prosperous than usual that evening was that my own therapist had gone on a monthlong vacation and I had noticed after two weeks that I didn't feel a bit worse, so I was already thinking about what I would say by way of my Ego Awareness leave-taking. And, just the day before, I had finished the final stage of the Pot Stoppers Incorporated program, complete with the prescribed ritual in which I had smoked my last bowlful, then tossed my pipe and my rolling papers and my carburetting tubes and all my collected seeds and twigs into the creek that ran past my parents' house.

Fifteen years of "paraphernalia" floated downstream like a miniature shipwreck. For some reason, somebody on the hill above the house was burning what seemed to be a nursing manual. All around me, scraps of curled black ash fell to the ground.

I'm tempted to come up with some rather obvious answers about where the negative energy that Judy was "releasing" so vigorously came from. There's a good chance that it had something to do with how cruel it was of me to hang around with her without really liking her. I can accept that, only I don't see how the alternatives would have been any better. I could have told her to get lost, but she was my friend, sort of. I could have made myself into a different kind of person—grown a beard, and bought a pair of yellow work boots, and learned to accompany her on the mandolin. Or I could have asked her, pleading like a teen-ager's mother, to look in the mirror one more time and think about how attractive she could be if she would only fix herself up a little. I know that sounds nasty, but it's ridiculous to think that her M.S.C. could have taught her to be so clear about what she wanted and then given her so little specific information about how to go about finding it.

It was cooling off outside; the windshield had fogged. I tried to talk about a few of the things I had learned in EAT, such as the idea of getting her sister to make a "contract" not to do anything to hurt herself, but I don't think my therapy vocabulary translated very well into hers. So I just held her around her cardigan as she sobbed. It might seem that she was actually crying about the death of our so-called relationship, but I don't think she had any illusions that much of a relationship had ever existed.

If either of us was marking the end of anything that night it was me, leaning back in the driver's seat of my final Volkswagen. There was something at once loose and solid about the way those old Bugs used to rest on the pavement, as if they were the only substantial things in our lives—symmetrical, trustworthy, perfectly balanced, with a confident slouch that even the best new cars would never achieve.

Dope, therapy, Volkswagens. How many years, in how many places, I had run that same scene over and over: going to my session, then driving home in the Volkswagen, then pacing back and forth in my room, smoking dope, thinking and thinking about the issues we had worked on in group, including, that summer, the question of whether Judy was as ugly and boring as I kept insisting or whether the real reason I had such a superior attitude toward her was that, deep down, I was afraid of letting myself open up to another person.

I've always wondered what conclusion was being celebrated, or mourned, up on the hill that day: a passed exam, an abandoned career? As I stood there on the bank of the little creek, with ten years of dope-smoking floating out of sight, the burned medical pages came drifting down around me. On some of the crinkled fritters of paper I could make out silvery graphite print on the carbon background: "Home-care alternatives . . . Maximum temperature . . ." A few chimney swifts, some of which, I thought I remembered reading, had been flying continuously since before the last Presidential election, darted around among the falling ashes.

My Volkswagen sat in its usual parking space, looking toward the creek with the same old face, the upper lip of the front hood folded over like the mouth of a man embarrassed about his teeth. It was a beautiful summer evening. Almost half of my life was gone, or about to be gone. I missed it already. I missed it the way you might miss the loose, rattling last stage of a cold.

—Edward Allen

MARGARET AND BUD

LAST year my brother Bud left his wife and adopted son and moved to California because, he said, it was the perfect place for a guy like him. He said that on the phone after he was already there. I asked him what he meant, but he said he couldn't explain it, couldn't make it clear, that it was just one of those things. "You know it when it hits you," he said.

"So what about Margaret?" I said. "How are you two getting along?"

"Famously," he said.

He asked me if I would look in on her and Conrad to help out while he was out of pocket—that's what he called it. I asked how long he was going to be out of pocket, and he said he didn't know. Then, right after I hung up from Bud, Margaret called. Things were happening fast. She said she wanted me to move in over at their house. I said I didn't know if that was a good idea.

Bud was a couple years older than I, forty-six, and Margaret was forty-one. Before the breakup, when I went over for dinner or something, they acted like those people on TV on last year's grotesque-family shows, the kind where everything's supposed to be funny because it's so ugly. Still, I didn't mind it. Margaret and I liked each other, and I was living in a condo project, so their house was a step up for me, with or without Bud.

"Just on a temporary basis," she said. "While he's gone."

Bud didn't have anything to say about it one way or the other. Margaret and I had always had a pretty good time being brother- and sister-in-law, so I said O.K. and moved in. I wanted to get rid of my place, anyway. So for five months I lived with Margaret, and that was great, but then he came back.

They were out on the brick terrace having a highball—that's what they still called it. They had one drink every day at noon, to get the day started, and another drink at five o'clock, before dinner. Sometimes they cheated. I got out of the way a lot, watching them from a distance, watching arms and legs move, heads cock and twist, bodies lean toward and away from each other—after a while it was like watching stick figures.

They'd been having so much fun for the ten days he'd been back, I was beginning to wonder if he'd really intended to leave in the first place, if he hadn't been making up some gyp crisis so he could spend a couple months dicking around with his pals in California.

The night he got back I'd said, "So what's the deal? How come you're home so soon? I thought this was the big breakout."

"Take it easy," he said. "It didn't work the way it was supposed to."

That night he designed the new couch, a tufted thing with no arms or back—he called it a "lounge." It was the only thing he'd designed in his entire life. He designed it for about three hours that night, did drawing after drawing of it on a roll of shelf paper that had faint bluebells on it. Then we built the thing the next day. We all had to pitch in and help. When we got it done it was uncomfortable, but he said it was exactly what he'd always wanted.

The next big family project we had was Bud's drinking. Margaret said, "You're killing yourself and me both, and now that you're back I don't want to let that happen."

"I guess if I *was* drinking I'd be killing all three of us," he said.

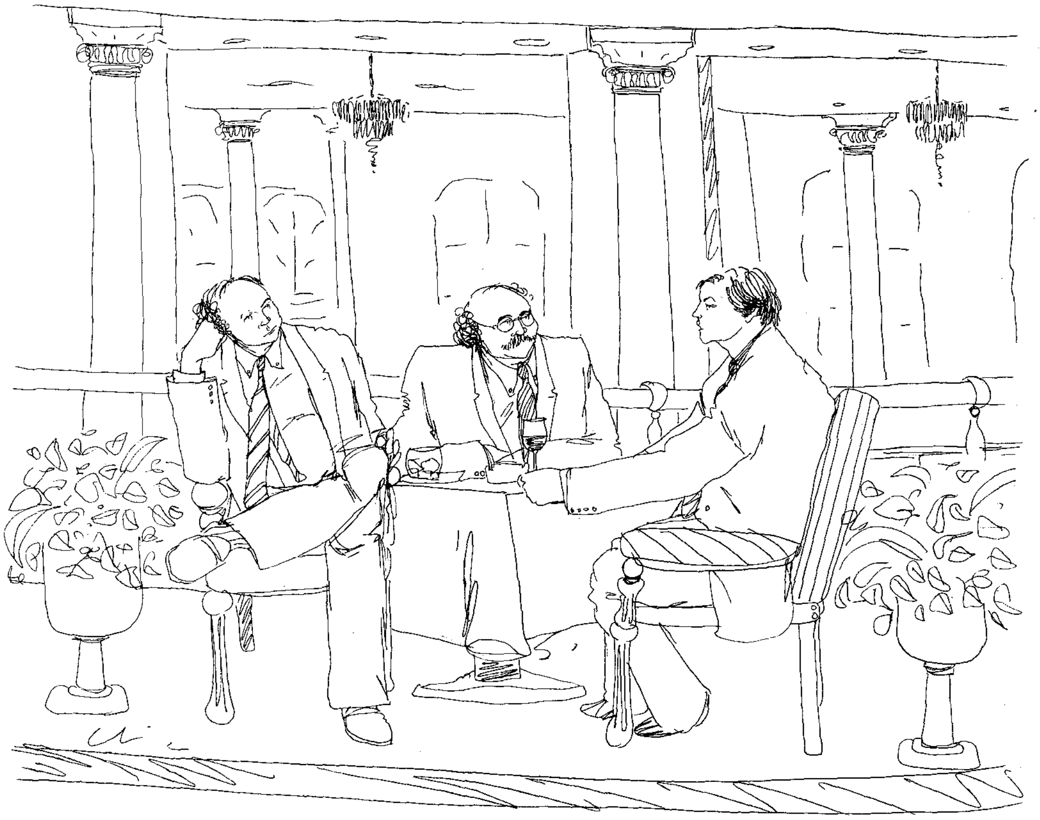
"Four," I said. "Don't forget Conrad."

"You know what I mean," he said.

"He always forgets Conrad," Margaret said.

I had an idea what he meant, but the drinking wasn't the best thing to talk to him about—he hadn't been drunk since he came back. As a matter of fact, I missed how he used to get sloppy and bitter and explain everything in the world as if we were living in some brain-damaged-prisoner-of-war camp. He was funny. And then he'd just fall asleep and leave Margaret and me together so that we could talk. Now they went off with each other, every night, went to bed at the same time.

Margaret was worried about Conrad and his girlfriend, Lollie. She said they were spending too much time together for people their age. Conrad was thirteen, we figured—maybe fourteen. She was afraid he'd go too far



"*I took power in 1983.*"

with Lollie. We had talked about it while Bud was gone. She felt like Conrad's real mother, but Bud didn't feel like the father. Conrad was one of those kids the state's always discovering in abandoned shotgun shacks it's trying to demolish. After Conrad was discovered, he was put in a home with a special school, and then it turned out Margaret knew his teacher and they started talking about this new kid a bulldozer driver found living like a wild animal in this old cabin, and one thing led to another, and pretty soon Conrad (though he wasn't Conrad then) was coming over for a visit. Not long after that, Margaret had a lawyer doing adoption papers.

I TRIED to stay away from Margaret as much as possible when I started living with her. I figured that made good sense—stay in my room, stay out of sight, go out with people. But the truth is it was a pleasure being with her, just the two of us, and sometimes Conrad; and when I should have started looking for a new apartment, I didn't really want to. I was working nights at the paper, so when I came in I'd watch TV until very late, news shows, the Soloflex ads, and I'd watch in the afternoons so I could catch Catherine Crier's lips. Sometimes I recorded those, they were so good—recorded them and played them back in slo-mo, frame advance. I'd be sitting there going in frame advance on Catherine's lips—they were two colors, three if you counted the line around them—and Margaret would come into the living room and laugh about it.

"Who does those *lips?*" she said once. "Is Way Bandy back from the dead?"

"Von Dutch Holland," I said. "The problem is, when they photograph her from the side she looks like a piglet."

"That's too bad," Margaret said.

When I watched in the mornings, there was always the cross-eyed newswoman, sitting there, living in denial. We had a new Toshiba color set that was thirty-five inches diagonally, the largest sealed picture tube available. Even Bud was excited about that when Margaret told him she and I had bought it, just after he left, but when he got back he barely even looked at it. Sometimes when I was watching TV I wasn't quite sure I *should* leave—I wondered what would happen if Bud decided to take off again. I'd just have to move back. Margaret didn't want to live alone, I knew that, not even with Conrad around to keep her company. She needed somebody like me, somebody who'd stay pretty close to home.

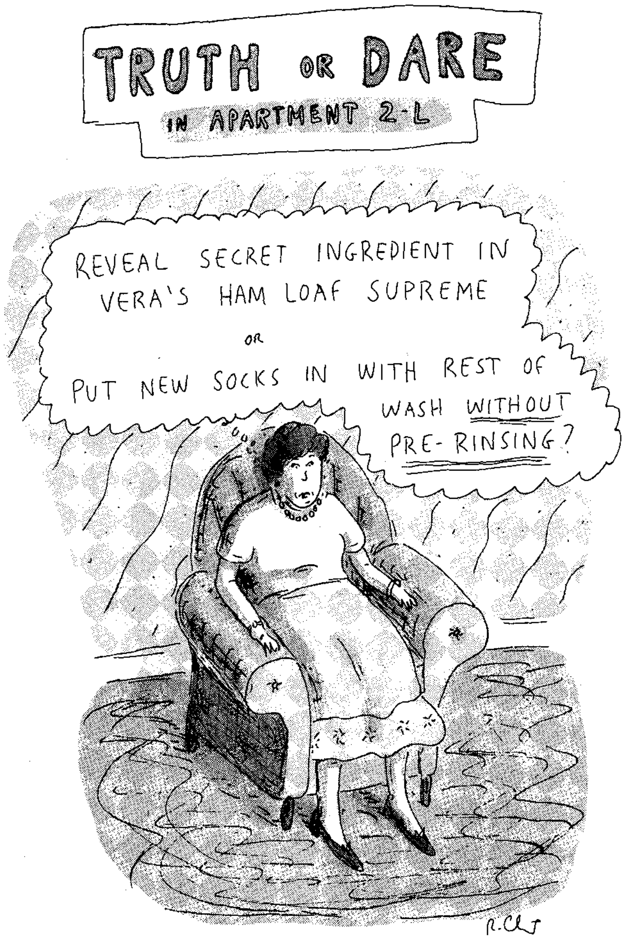
Bud had time off from work to get "straightened away" after his episode. Conrad was busy chasing after Lollie all the time. She came by one day wearing nothing but black tights, a lemon-colored tie-dyed T-shirt with "Buy One, Get One Free" printed across the chest, and some very big shoes. She was driving a motorcycle.

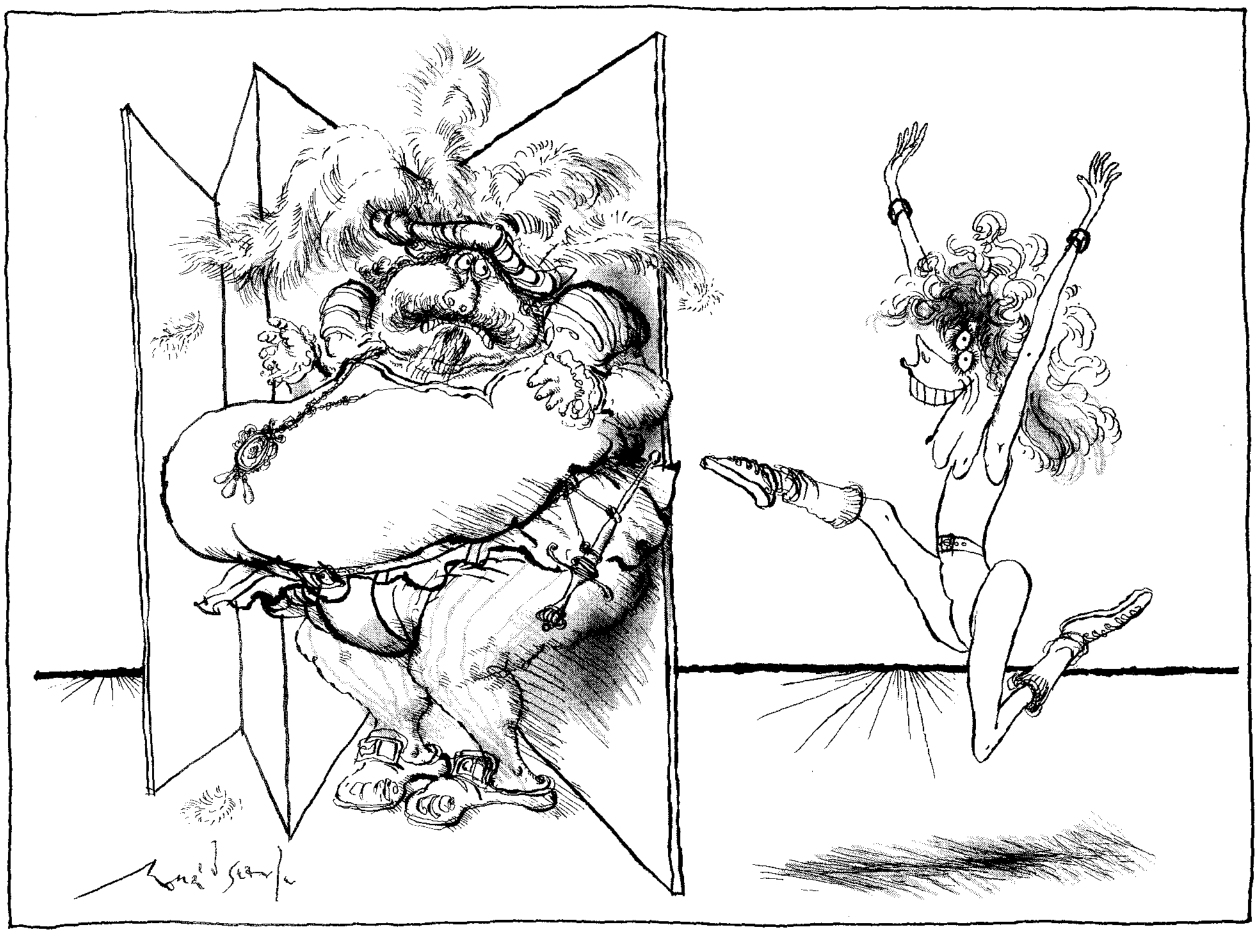
There was always planning going on. Margaret planned. Bud did, too. I tried to stay out of their way. Sometimes it seemed as if he was performing for me, as if he wanted me to watch him live. That was how it looked, the way he talked and signalled Margaret, the way he touched her when I was looking. He did this thing with his hand, making a gun-finger whenever she anticipated what he was thinking or what he was about to say. I hated that. He was always shooting somebody with that finger. And whenever something hot was on TV he wriggled his stupid eyebrows.

A usual plan would be that Margaret wanted to go to the store to pick up her glasses and then get Bud's shirts at the laundry—that was a big midweek outing. Another was taking me to the doctor so I could get a checkup. They were also planning a pool trip. I told them I didn't like the pool, that I drew the line at the pool. It was one of those community pools surrounded with chain-link fence. It was built in the fifties, when just a few people lived in the area, but now people came from everywhere to use it, too many of them, doing things in the water.

Margaret got on her new bathing suit and went outside in it, trying it out, showing it off for Bud. It was aquamarine, with a V shape down the front—a "fifties-revival affair" she'd called it when she showed it to me. She had a white towel wrapped around her waist so she looked dressed, but Bud was out there in an undershirt. They were talking, getting along fine. They laughed as if they were telling each other jokes nonstop, and they grabbed at each other like kids. Sometimes when I saw them together, just the two of them, through a window or way off in another room, they seemed made for each other.

But at other times Margaret said that I was the


TRUTH OR DARE
IN APARTMENT 2-L
REVEAL SECRET INGREDIENT IN VERA'S HAM LOAF SUPREME
OR
PUT NEW SOCKS IN WITH REST OF WASH WITHOUT PRE-RINSING?



CROSSED PATHS

Gargantua Meets Jane Fonda

• •

good brother, the way I was always helping. Then she laughed and said she was joking, but I could tell by her eyes that she wasn't joking as much as she pretended.

I SWIPED Conrad's radio and listened in bed in the early-morning hours. I'd close my eyes and try to see myself a kid again, sitting on the hood of a car or with a bunch of people at a drive-in. And when they played a song that I really felt, that I could get to hurt me, I wondered why I wasn't where I could hear it right—at the beach with somebody like Margaret, walking the crusty sand at night, foam rolling up on the shells, wind bouncing on her skin, or at some country club with her, sitting at a white metal table by *that* pool, drinking something silly from an awkward glass and noticing what pretty hair Margaret had, how it held the clean pool light.

I'd fall asleep listening to Conrad's radio and wake up the next day around noon. The sun would be high and round, the yard a burning green desert, another planet. Margaret always said the yard was important to her, but to me it was just a half acre of hot grass. I'd grab some breakfast and sit down with a book, even though I don't like books, most new ones. You sit there and slug away, trying to stay interested, trying not to start drawing little pictures in the margins—little guys hanging themselves, or dogs barking. Maybe if it's raining and I'm in the bedroom with the curtains closed but still hearing the rain, then an old book is O.K., especially if it smells stale and has that thick, brittle paper.

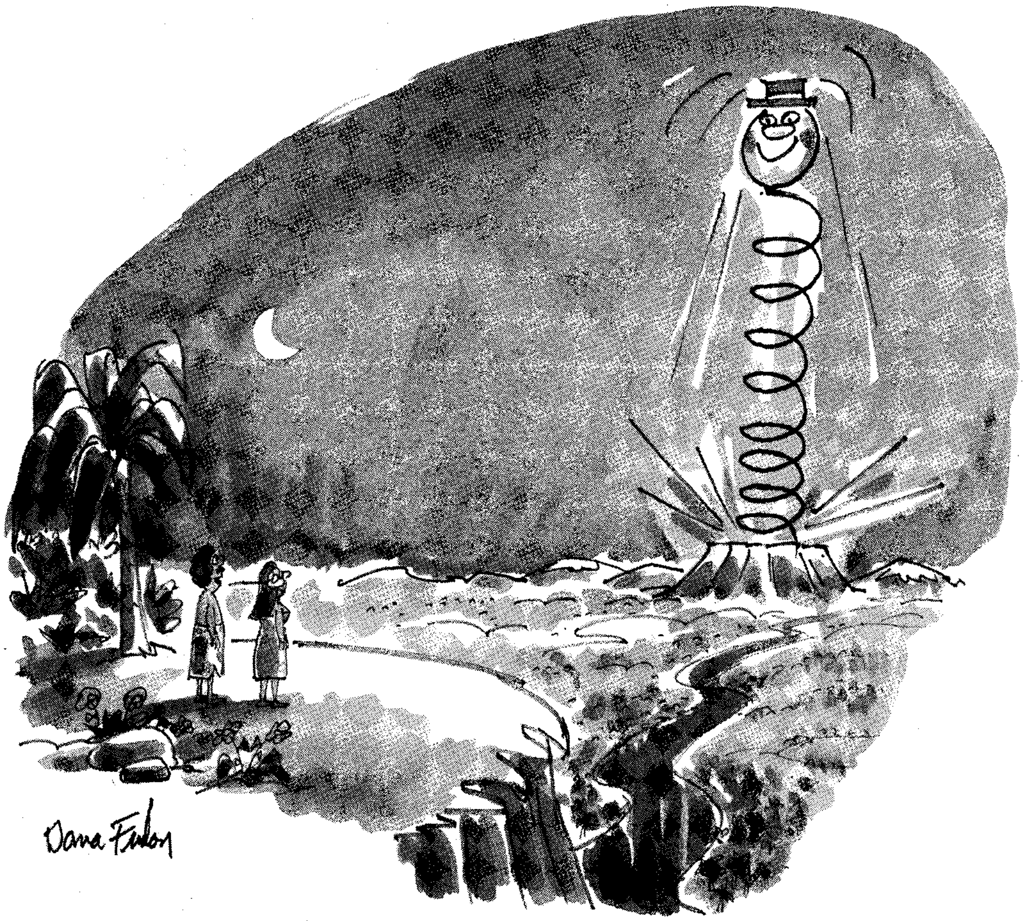
THE doctor had a tiny office, cheesy furniture, bad lamps, plastic plants. His magazines looked as if he got them from a paper drive. He gave me a shot. He said, "How long's it been since you've had that tetanus booster?"

"Got me," I said. "About thirty years."

"Well, we'll give you one anyway," he said, patting my forearm. He had long hairs on the backs of his hands.

Afterward I took Margaret to have an ice-cream cone at the food court in the mall. She seemed to have a lot of fun watching the fountain. But then, when we got home, Bud wanted to have a talk with her, so I went out in the yard.

I just sat there in my khakis. I guess it wasn't all that hot once you got used to it. But time was stopped. I felt tired, too—Bud was starting back to work, Conrad was going to be grounded for something, there were no dogs around, the birds were too high up in the air to be interesting. I had to do something. I was thinking of making twigs



"The gods are antic tonight."

• •

my hobby. I found this twig stuck in the fence between Bud's yard and the Plossoms' yard and broke some of the bark off. I thought I'd sandpaper it until the knots were like hard bites under the skin, things you scratch over and over.

IT looked as if Bud was back for the duration, so I started thinking about putting my stuff together so I could get ready to move. It was possible he might take off again, but I guessed he wouldn't. I hated to leave Bud with Margaret, though. When Bud had moved out, she called me first thing. We'd always cared about each other, Margaret and I, so I wasn't surprised when it turned out the best thing was for me to move in with her.

Ten days after I'd settled into her spare bedroom—the one she'd used as an exercise room—the overnight-mail guy came with a package from Bud. I had to sign for it, because Margaret wasn't home. She opened it that night, and it was a letter from Bud and a video. She started reading the letter and then started crying, so I tried to comfort her, and then went to my room.

I stayed there for an hour, resting. When I heard the TV snap on, I opened my door to see what it was—the tape Bud sent, or some movie, or MTV, which Margaret watched all the time when he was gone. It sounded as if she wasn't watching anything, or was watching without the sound. I came out of the bedroom and down the hall—I wasn't sure this was a good idea—and leaned around the corner to the living room, curious, trying to get a glimpse of what was on the television. It was Bud. He was barely sitting there on the TV screen. Margaret was on the sofa looking at Bud on television. I watched from the hall for a minute. Bud wasn't talking, or even looking at the camera—he was working. He had papers and his briefcase up there on the desk beside him, and he was writing things on one of his famous yellow pads. It was clear there wasn't anyone running the camera—he'd just put it there, pointed it at himself. He had his head and shoulders in the picture, and a little more to get the desk in. Margaret sat there watching him.

He was whispering sometimes, things like "God *damn*!" and "Oh, I see. Thirty-one fifty-*eight*"—that kind of thing. After a while Margaret caught me watching and signalled me to come over and sit with her on the sofa, so I did. I sat next to her. She put her arm around me, pulled me close, and leaned her head on my shoulder. It was going dark outside, changing to a half-light that made everything in our room look filtered. I smelled her shampoo. We hadn't turned on any lamps yet.

We watched Bud on TV for two hours. Not once did Bud say a thing to the camera, although he did look up a couple of times. He smiled, or sort of smiled. He did this thing he does with his face when he wants to smile. I'd seen it since we were kids.

Later that night I caught Margaret watching the tape again, and I sat with her, and we looked at the whole thing all the way through a second time.

This became a regular event for a couple of months, a nightly thing we'd do together—sit on the sofa and hold on to each other and watch Bud work. Sometimes Conrad came around, but most times he didn't want to get involved, so it was something just between Margaret and me. We'd put the tape in during dinner, and we'd eat and watch Bud over there across the room, working on the big screen. Then we'd do the dishes, clean up the kitchen, and go into the dark living room and sit on the old couch. Sometimes we'd play around a little, sometimes we made love right there with his big face shining down on us, and sometimes we'd just stare at the screen together, enjoying his company.

—FREDERICK BARTHELME

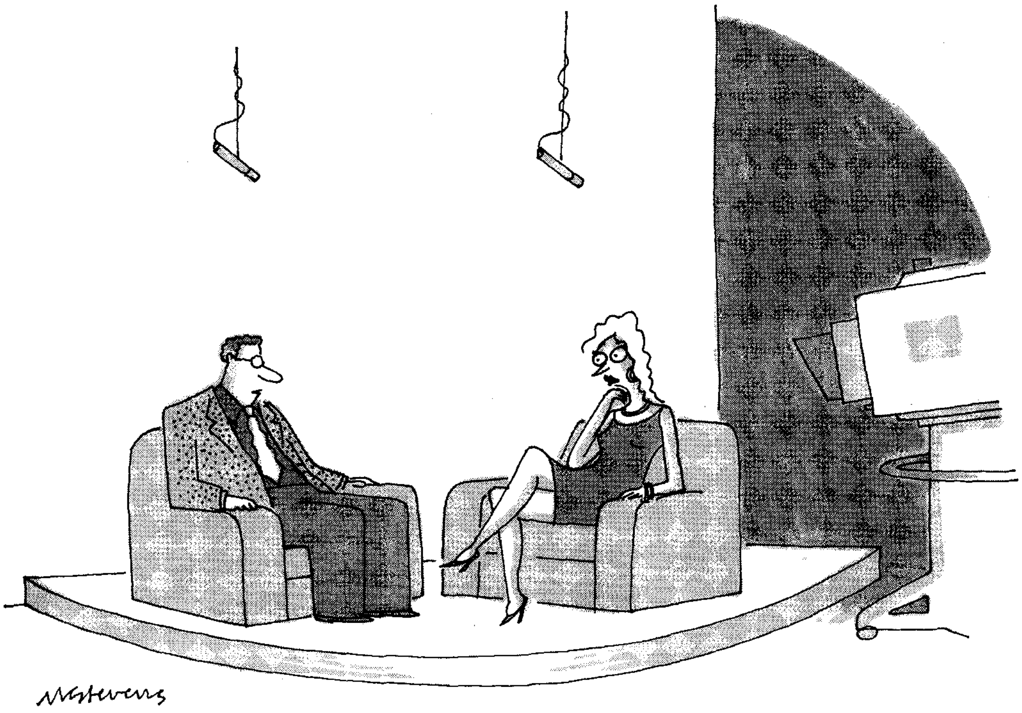
A REPORTER AT LARGE

THE POLITICS OF NEIGHBORHOOD

A DEFEATED-LOOKING woman in a gray cloth coat and a fur hat came in from Bolshaya Gruzinskaya Street on a windy evening last February. She pulled open the old wooden door of No. 30, trudged up the worn stairs to the second floor, and entered a small office shabbily decorated with yellow wallpaper and yellow curtains. Without removing her hat and coat, she seated herself at one end of a desk occupied by a young man with a broad brow, a street-cleaner named Vladimir Tikhonov. For this occasion, he wore a dark suit and, on his left lapel, a gleaming pin in the form of a red flag with a blue border and a gold hammer and sickle and star—the flag of the Russian Republic. It signified his position as a deputy in the *raisoviet*, or District Council, of Moscow's Krasno-Presnensky neighborhood—a position he had won during the country's first truly free elections, a year before.

The woman had an acute housing problem, as do most citizens who venture into this forum of burgeoning democracy known as the deputy's reception. Here, in a sparsely furnished office or a cramped apartment, the people can lay their grievances at the feet of their representatives, who may or may not take the trouble to search through the governmental labyrinth for the right department, the right bureaucrat, the lever of power that can open the mysterious door to resolution.

Muscovites are cynical supplicants. There is not much hope written on the weary faces of those who come; they surely know that the deputy's reception is not a new institution. In this neighborhood, it began a decade or more ago—years before Mikhail Gorbachev opened up the politics of his country—in a time when deputies to the District Council were chosen by the Communist Party apparatus, ran unopposed, and were more responsive to their superiors than to their constituents. Today, however, the lines of command have been disrupted by the electoral process, and some of the new legislators—those who are idealistic or dedicated or wish to be reëlected—have turned their periodic receptions into real listening sessions, in which they actually try to grapple with voters' problems, albeit with limited success.



"I'd rather not talk about my pain right now, Linda—I'd rather talk about my book."

Whatever hesitation Gorbachev has recently shown in pursuing his reforms, his earlier policies of openness have already set in motion a turbulence of confused political currents at the neighborhood level. The Communist Party has been diminished but not destroyed, avowed democrats have been elected but not empowered, and authority has been fragmented but not redistributed in any clear fashion. New legislators vie with old bureaucrats and Party officials in a scramble for political power, without knowing quite where to find it.

The somewhat conservative turn that Gorbachev took last winter had no impact in the Krasno-Presnensky district that I could discern. There was no chill in the outspoken debate, no reluctance to criticize, organize, and jockey for influence, no sudden retreat from a desire for a decentralized economy. Decrees from Gorbachev seemed to dissipate into the atmosphere of political uncertainty before reaching Bolshaya Gruzinskaya Street, where nobody paid any attention to them.

If a recalcitrant spirit alone could have produced efficient government and economic plenty, the Krasno-Presnensky neighborhood would have been thriving. In the flush of exhilaration after last year's elections, its boisterous new council enacted a sweeping resolution placing the district's land, water, air, and natural resources under local sovereignty. The measure was later rescinded as impractical, but its defiant tone may have helped lead some citizens into believing that they had given democracy a try; the most nostalgic among them were now blaming the newly elected "democrats" for the empty shelves in the food stores, and were calling on their legislators to give the country less talk and more order. In turn, many of the legislators in the district seemed simply confounded by the impossibility of governing in this time and place. Some, such as those who were conducting the reception this February evening, focussed on the undramatic task of trying to make government reflect grass-roots interests, and, in the process, to acquire some power of their own.

Thus Vladimir Tikhonov listened with an earnest gaze of sympathy to the woman's complaint, then asked her to write it up in a formal statement. She hunched over the desk, explaining in longhand the hardships of the communal apartment where she had been living with her young son. The term "communal apartment" is a long-standing Soviet euphemism for Hell. Typically, three or four families are crowded into one flat, each family confined to a single room—grandmothers, children, and all—jockeying for turns in the apartment's only bathroom and kitchen. The nation's collectivist ethic does not prosper in such circumstances, especially during the morning rush. Dizzying quarrels erupt, and over time the frictions often rub away the veneer of civility. It is rare to hear anyone who has lived in a communal apartment speak well of any "neighbor."

The woman and her son had been driven out of their humble room by one of their neighbors, a woman who had recently married and wanted extra space. The newlyweds had no right to expel anyone—they were just tenants—but they managed it, by sheer force of unpleasantness, and now the woman and her son were residing with her mother. "It is absolutely impossible to live with those neighbors," the woman declared.

She craved an apartment of her own, and she argued her case before Vladimir Tikhonov by invoking a privilege that exists primarily in the fictitious realm described by official regulations. The state, seeking to regulate the deprivations of ordinary life, has constructed an elaborate sand castle of rules for access to housing, food, medical care, and other essentials. In the face of widespread shortages, these "rights," as they are known, often prove to be elusive. Nevertheless, without quite believing in them, people keep on citing them. The woman was such a case. She claimed that because her son was ill with an allergy she was eligible for additional square metres of living space above the usual allotment. In her room she had not been provided with even the standard amount, of course. Tikhonov puzzled over the problem.

Into the office swept a tall, forty-year-old man with a radiant, boyish smile. The blowing snow on the street had dusted the shoulders of his black sheepskin coat and the top of his lush light-brown fox-fur hat. He took them off with a flourish, revealing a lapel pin like Tikhonov's. This was Mikhail Mikhailovich Yashin, politician par excellence. When I had met him two days earlier, he told me, "I am a member of the self-governing council of the Presnya microdistrict, a deputy of the council of the Krasno-Presnensky district, a deputy of the Moscow City Council, a member of the city committee of the Communist Party, and an employee of the Committee of State Security." The Committee of State Security—in Russian, Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti—is the K.G.B. Yashin said that he was not an agent, just a technician in the communications division, working with telephones and satellites.

Agent or technician, Yashin acted like a man in command. If Tikhonov, as a District Council deputy, was the equivalent of a simple alderman, Yashin, with all his offices, was simultaneously a city council member, an alderman, and, on the "microdistrict" level, a precinct worker. He introduced himself to the woman, took a seat behind the other desk in the office, and began to read the statement she had written.

Tikhonov fumbled for a solution. "I can send the documents about the quarrelling in the apartment to the head of the police," he offered.

Yashin was bolder. First, he suggested beginning an action in court against the neighbor. The woman explained that the situation had gone past that point: the district-level executive branch—known in Russian as the *ispolkom*, or Executive Committee—had announced that it intended to seal her room, so that nobody could live in it.

"They can't do that," Yashin declared. "It's illegal. We should apply to the *ispolkom* for your right to live in that room." He took a piece of white paper and began to write a formal statement to the Executive Committee demanding an investigation and a resolution.

But as the woman went on talking Yashin gradually realized that returning to the communal flat was no solution. Finally, he said, "Don't worry. The question is not how to be given the right to live in this room but how to get another apartment." He pledged his assistance, gave her his office and

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OLD LANDSCAPE, UMBRIA

The animosity of the inanimate doesn't
accommodate. See where the stone shimmers,
where wind has washed the face of the Rocca

to the color of poppies at dusk, to
ash. Down, too, the steady ilex grows and crowns
the hill, scrambling for purchase as the screech

owl does, who returns no matter what: he wants to own
the place where he lives. Loosestrife clogs the road,
asphalt crumples—one understands as a child of

nature does the impulse to paint over all the frescoes
in San Fransisco though civility applauds the counter-
impulse that lets the marble dog go on

eating grapes on the façade of San Pietro at Spoleto,
a church itself built on the wrack of a Roman
cemetery, and where today, in the dust, a woman complains

she has been left alone: her own white dog
has run off all the way down here from Monteluco.
Finally, here is her son to take her home in a

car. Tender, he holds the captured Alsatian in his arms.

• •

The dog wears a red collar and a pleased look—
he is no kin to the tiny dog who writhes under the weight

of his marble garland, a motif echoed in a second
church three kilometres up, where once again, after
a gap of only ten or eleven centuries, marriages

are occurring. Only for this moment are we not
figures in stone. Only now as, accommodating, we
hand over coins to the curate for the San Giuliano

restoration fund, a man whose deftness is surprising
in one so old, so deaf, who shows us the view down to
San Pietro, where the dog is still gone mad, do the leaves

even answer our breath, do twigs move on the landscape's
latticed crown—the distant hill flecked with
explosions of poppies where now perhaps from sheer

incredulity the boy who tends sheep after school
thinks of the lady who was afraid of the dogs, who
couldn't speak, who waved from the window,

who vanished. Like and unlike the Etruscans, who near here
barely left a language, but who mapped the sacred wood
so well they could not help but enter it.

—CYNTHIA ZARIN

• •

home telephone numbers, and urged her to stay in touch.

What struck me most about this encounter, and those with other citizens during the next three hours, was Yashin's convincing display of sincerity. Tikhonov was attentive and concerned, but Yashin managed to convey a vibrant sense of fascination, compassion, and outrage over every single issue that came to him. He looked directly into the eyes of each person who spoke, smiled frequently, and conversed with a buoyant intensity that seemed to say: Your problem is the most important question of the day, and I am going to solve it. "I love Dale Carnegie," he told me at one point. He had read the Russian translation of "How to Win Friends and Influence People."

He also showed an odd predilection for the fictions of the past. When I joked that his K.G.B. communications job had probably involved his arranging for my telephone to be bugged when I lived in Moscow in the nineteen-seventies, he stiffened and declaimed the Soviet constitution's ban on such wiretapping, as if he actually believed that the prohibition had been observed.

Yashin delighted in confronting individual troubles that reflected broader difficulties, which allowed him to pepper his discussions with little political-science lectures on the virtue of neighborhood government, on the need for informed voting, on the obligation of citizens to shun passivity and take responsibility for ruling themselves. This was a new breed of Soviet politician, born of the authoritarian system of decades yet attuned to the potential of power that is wielded from the bottom up.

Yashin was especially pleased by the round-faced man who entered the office next, because he had a parking problem. Parking is a cause to Yashin, who has visionary plans for a four-hundred-car underground garage as part of an apartment complex he hopes to build. In the past, private cars were so scarce that Soviet planners never had to think of parking lots or garages when they designed housing, but the extensive black market now makes automobiles more easily available to people willing to pay, and the courtyards and narrow service roads among Moscow's residential buildings have grown more congested. Cars parked in the open are also vulnerable to thieves, who steal either the entire vehicle or its valuable parts and decorative pieces.

Theft was the complaint of the round-faced man, who wore a medal on his tan sports jacket—a gold star and red ribbon that hung from the right breast pocket. "For Afghanistan," he told me later. "I was a fighter pilot." He had returned home to the mundane task of trying to keep his automobile intact. For a while, he said, about twenty small garages were available nearby, each an unsightly metal container with just enough room for a compact. "One lady was against the twenty garages," he snorted. "She protested, so they took them away with cranes. The majority is angry about all that. We have a crisis of trust. They don't build anything here—they just do stupid things like changing the names on streets. They're not paying attention to the things that are really needed. Where can I put my car? They steal mirrors all the time. Where can I put it?"

The "they" who brought in the cranes were the *ispolkom*. Yashin was having running battles with this Executive Committee on many fronts, and he was happy to tell the fighter pilot about other transgressions. "They" had also dispatched welders to remove a high iron fence that residents had erected around a small parking area, Yashin said, and he noted that the Executive Committee had acted in response to complaints by people in only four apartments. (Among Russians, popular ideas of democracy usually include the intoxicating notion of majority rule but not the companion concept of minority rights.) "The microdistrict is taking the Executive Committee to court," Yashin declared gleefully. "We will have a war with the *ispolkom*."

Nearly every citizen who presented a problem that evening received a cajoling challenge from Yashin, delivered with staccato, machine-gun rapidity. "Whom did you vote for in the elections?" he asked the fighter pilot.

"For Yashin," the pilot said, but he got a lecture anyway.

"Thirty per cent of the people who were elected are not competent," Yashin told him. "People didn't know who it was they were voting for. You should first get acquainted with those you're voting for."

Later came a middle-aged couple and an elderly man who were worried by rumors that they were going to be evicted. Yashin launched into a mono-

"Maybe we should cut back on those lawn catalogues."

• •

logue on the need for a "complete reorganization of our executive branch." The three said they had heard that the building where they had lived since 1953 was to be turned into office space. Yashin promised to find out, then told them, "You don't have to worry, because in this microdistrict we have a self-governing council. You'll feel its help all the time. And you yourself won't allow anything bad to happen." He gave them a pep talk on organizing themselves, pushing for their rights, and resisting imperious orders from on high.

When the next couple complained about the run-down condition of their building, Yashin said, "So coöperate with your neighbors. Raise some money to renovate the house. Put a small shop in your yard and for two years it will bring some profit, and after two years you can see if it's worthwhile." This was not your typical K.G.B. man and Communist Party official.

At the end of the evening, I asked him if he could really resolve these people's problems.

"Absolutely!" he exclaimed, tossing his head. "I'm sure! I know how to solve them."

I wondered if his K.G.B. connection helped get coöperation from bureaucrats. It was hard to imagine otherwise, after so many years of fear. And he had told acquaintances that he regarded his job as a kind of insurance policy. He sometimes explained half jokingly that as a preaching democrat, a Communist, and a K.G.B. employee he had nearly every contingency covered. He would be O.K. whatever finally prevailed in the Soviet Union—democracy, Party rule, or a strict regime. In his work as a deputy, though, the K.G.B. helped him "only from the point of view of discipline," he insisted to me. "For sixteen years, I have worked for the K.G.B., and I learned to be disciplined. When I speak to voters, I write down everything about them, and inform the visitor what's being done with his case. It has given me a certain working skill. Some people may say, 'Oh, I can't do anything.' I'm not like this. I don't give up."

Against his countrymen's wary mood of declining expectations, Yashin seemed like somebody from another culture, infused with a smiling, handshaking, can-do fervor as he prowled the streets of his neighborhood, mobilizing teen-agers to paint playground equipment, organizing residents to press for building renovations, and drawing up elaborate schemes for new apartment houses, stores, recreation centers, and underground garages, which he hoped would be paid for in part by Western companies seeking investments or office space in his district. He was a natural politician—but more natural to Minneapolis than to Moscow. In Moscow, he looked oddly out of place; his enthusiasm was too large, his optimism too expansive for the grim bitterness of his city in an era of disillusionment.

AT the time of Peter the Great, what is now the Krasno-Presnensky district was known for its healing waters, which flowed up through limestone from springs and into the small Presnya River. As an adjective describing water, *presnya* means "fresh," or "sweet," and the entire district was called Presnya until after the 1917 Revolution, when the Krasno- (which means "red") was added to the name. The Presnya River now courses invisibly through an underground conduit into the Moscow River.

The district is formed like a misshapen piece of pie, beginning as a narrow sliver at the Kremlin walls and flaring as it stretches outward to embrace cozy old neighborhoods and austere government ministries, tree-lined streets and broad boulevards, theatres and embassies, small factories and ugly warehouses, comfortable apartments for pampered officials, and decaying communal apartments for

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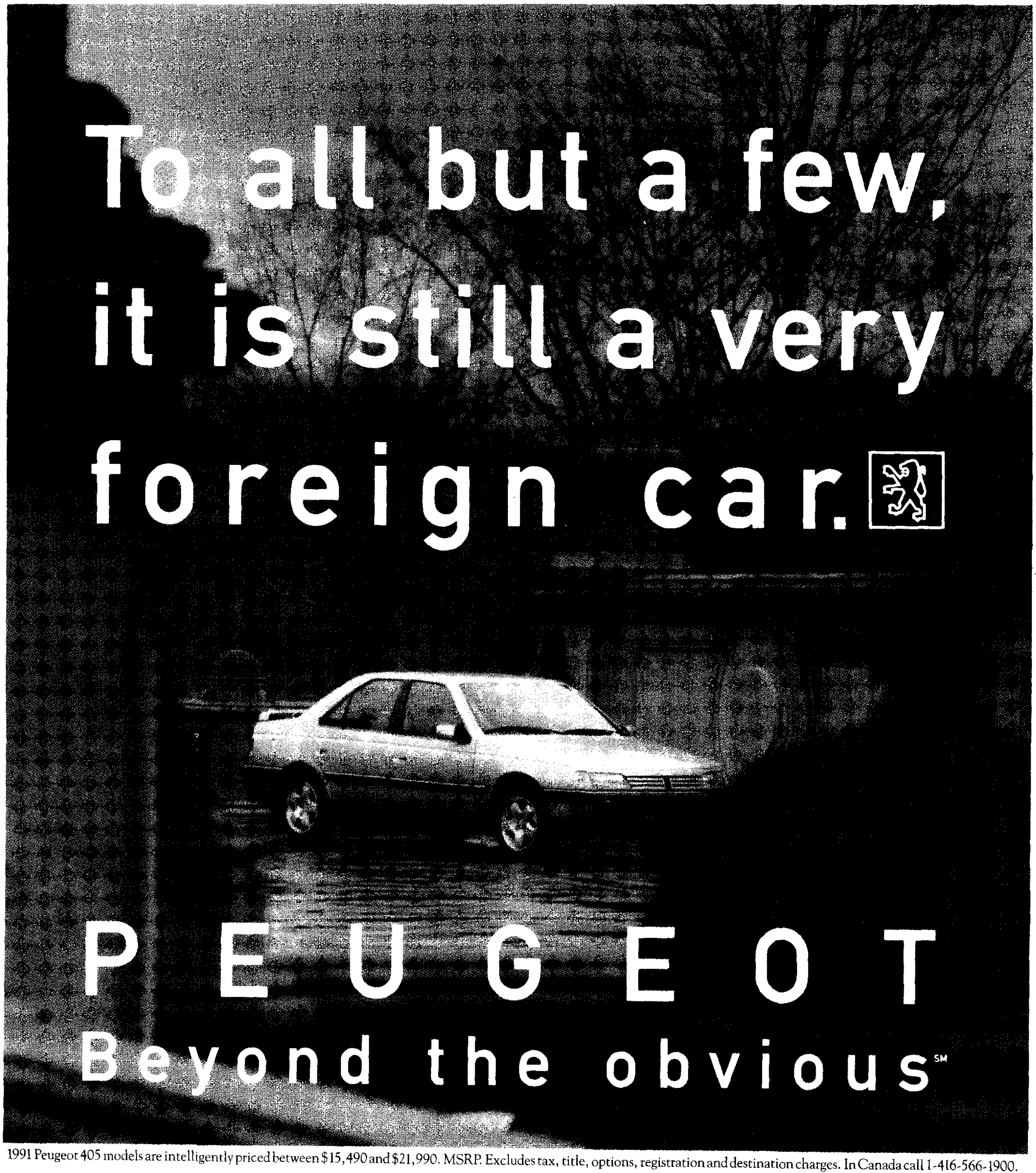

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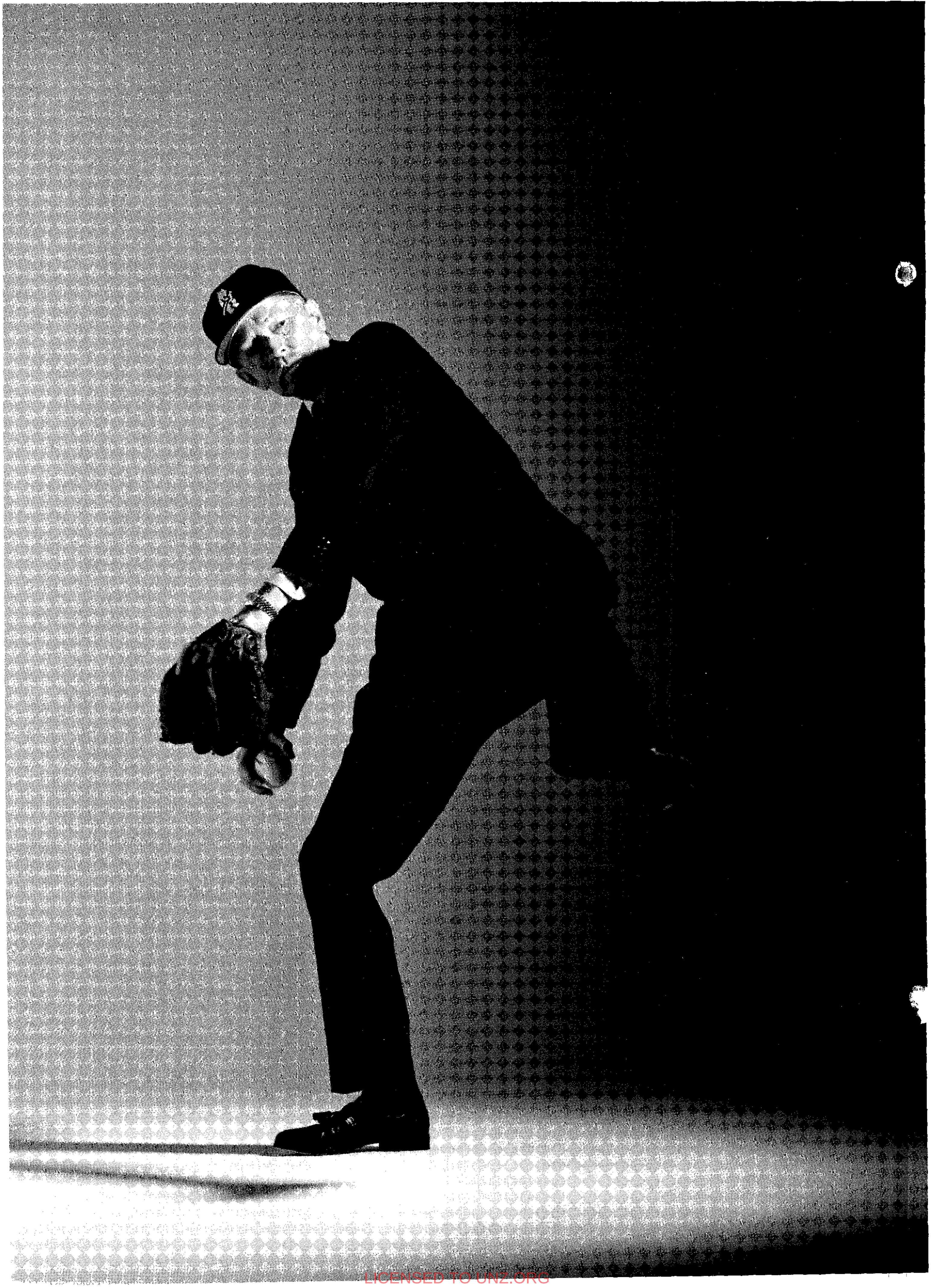

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"One day I was out to a game, and right next to me, there was a cameraman from NBC. He had a Brooklyn Dodger cap on. It was the same cap the ballplayers wore! He let me look at it, and it was beautifully made. Lands' End quality."

The cap appealed to Dick for another reason besides the pure fun of it. "In a way, a baseball cap is kind of a classic. And particularly American. Like the clothing in our catalog."

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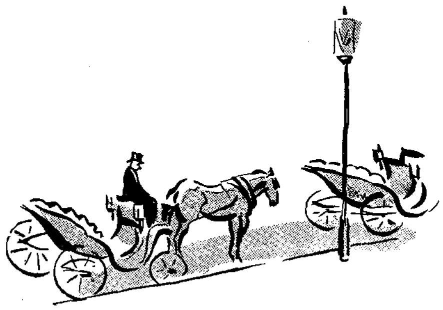
ordinary citizens. Inside the Sadovo Ring Road, toward the city center, forty per cent of the residents live in communal apartments, the rest in one-family apartments. The district's boundary runs northwest from the Kremlin along Gorky Street (now restored to its prerevolutionary name, Tverskaya Street); turns west at the Byelorussky railroad station; encloses Vagonkovskoye Cemetery, where the irreverent balladeer Vladimir Vysotsky is buried; then follows Khoroshevskoye Highway to a street called Magistralnaya 4. There it turns southwest, then south, then southeast to the northern bank of the Moscow River. The boundary line follows the S curve of the river for a while, encompassing the wooded Krasno-Presnensky Park, where cross-country skiers glide along silently in the snow, and the International Trade Center, a hotel-and-office tower inspired by the late industrialist Armand Hammer as a location for Western business representatives. The border then zigzags back toward the center, crossing the wide Sadovo Ring Road and running parallel to Khlebny Lane to the Kremlin. Among the notable institutions in the district's territory are the Tchaikovsky Conservatory, whose students have included Rachmaninoff, Khatchaturian, and Rostropovich; the Gorky Institute of Literature; the Mayakovsky Theatre; the embassies of the United States, Germany, Poland, and twenty-one other countries; the planetarium; and the zoo.

Today, the Krasno-Presnensky district contains about a hundred and forty thousand residents, whose fortunes range from privilege to poverty. They benefit from living near the center of Moscow, which is convenient and more aesthetically pleasant than the gargantuan, antiseptic high rises that have been constructed at the edges of the city. But the charm has faded in Krasno-Presnensky's quiet quarters, where four- and five-story buildings were built fifty or sixty years ago, and a few even older, dilapidated wooden houses remain. The back streets, pockmarked with potholes, are rarely plowed in the winter, although trucks and plows sit idle all day on Sadovo-Kudrinskaya Street. Most sidewalks are no longer swept or shovelled, and pedestrians have to slog through filthy snow and slush as they hunt for food in the mostly empty stores along Krasina Street.

The neighborhood has a seedy look. Windows are broken in three external elevator shafts on a five-story apartment house at the corner of Mantulinskaya and Sergei Makeev Streets. In a nearby courtyard, dark-green dumpsters are turned upside down; ravens peck at orange peels and other garbage strewn about in the snow. The only counterpoint is a boy making a snow fort while a small brown-and-black dog dances around him.

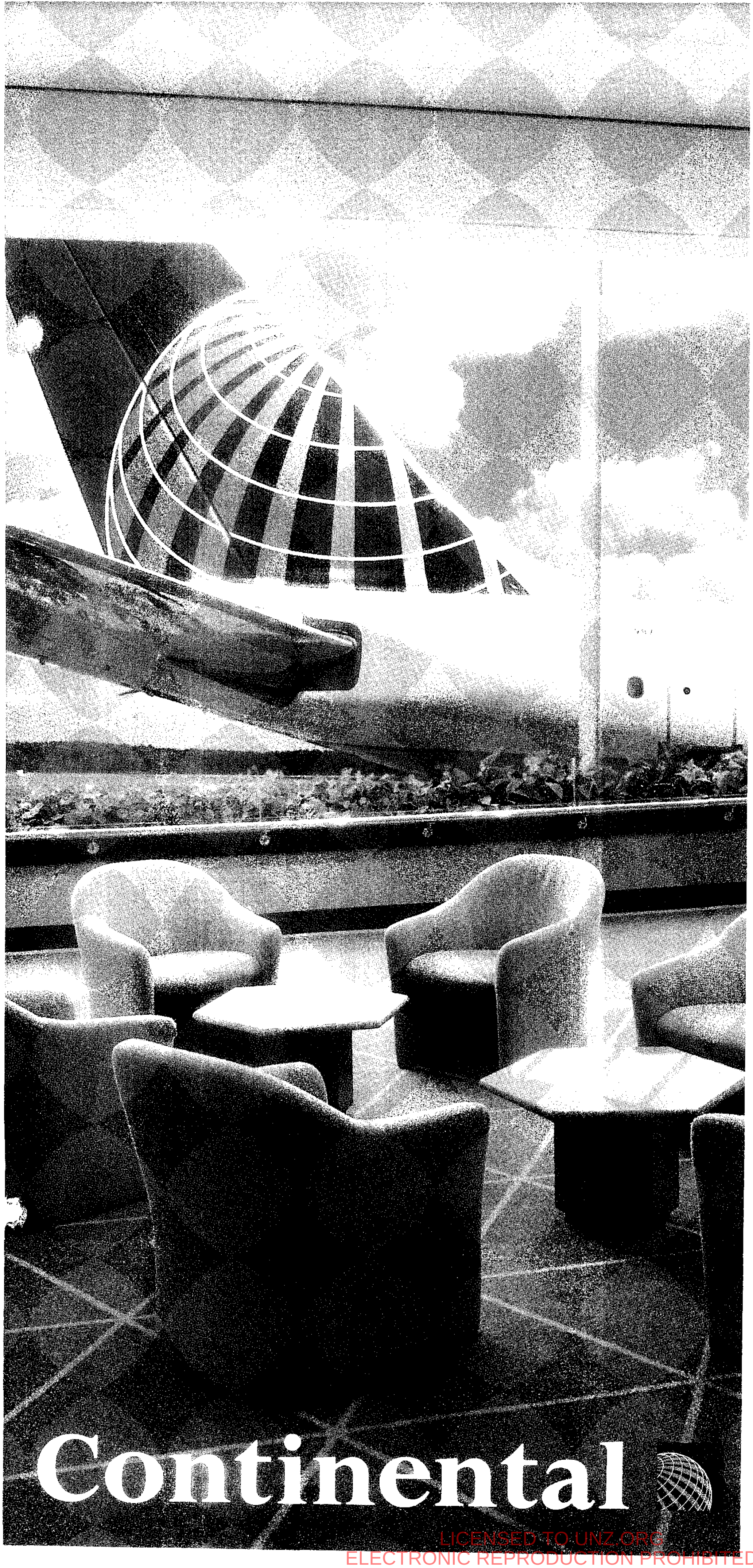
In Tishinsky Market, the poor come on a Saturday morning to try to sell a pathetic assortment of used and mostly useless items, which they arrange haphazardly on pieces of cloth or sheets of newspaper spread out on the grimy snow. The market meanders through a series of alleys and small courtyards, among concrete and wooden buildings painted various shades of cream and brown and green. The effect is of a serious rummage sale, with a tinge of desperation. Buttons, old shoes and boots, unidentifiable electrical parts, one glove, another glove that doesn't match, eyeglasses with scratched lenses, rusty wrenches, valves, discarded shirts and sweaters, empty bottles, and even empty beer cans with European brand names on them are offered. The cans must have been picked from foreigners' trash by scavengers searching for artifacts from the West. Gesturing to their goods with callused hands, the sellers coax and tease and woo as crowds amble by. A red-nosed drunken man haggles merrily with another drunk over the price of some rags. A young fellow, behind a stack of empty Heineken beer cans, gives the price of one of them as twenty kopecks—just under four cents at the official exchange rate.

Down one alley, an old woman with a weathered face, her head wrapped in a gray shawl, is selling some kind of white homemade ointment to a younger woman, who is puffing vigorously on a cigarette. "Spread it thin," the saleswoman advises, running her right forefinger along the back of her left hand. "Twice a day," she clucks in a motherly tone. "Everything will be fine. After you give treatment to yourself, then you'll believe in the medicine. But you need to give up smoking." For a small, flat jar of the stuff she charges the hefty price of ten rubles—a day's wage in many jobs.



Krasno-Presnensky is one of thirty-three districts in Moscow, and one of eleven that have been drawn, wedge-shaped, to reach to the Kremlin. The delineations have no obvious geographical, political, or economic rationale but were defined around the interests of various Communist Party committees, which coveted a piece of the hallowed ground in or near Red Square. Such gerrymandering seemed satisfactory when everybody just took orders from the top, but Moscow's insurgent mayor, Gavriil Popov, wants to dissolve the district administrations and redraw boundaries in favor of a more streamlined government. Moscow alone has some five thousand legislators sprinkled among city and district councils—a number unwieldy enough to draw impatient remarks even from such supporters of political pluralism as Sergei Stankevich, the deputy mayor. "This city has too much democracy per square kilometre," he told the New York *Times* last winter. In Krasno-Presnensky alone, the District Council has a hundred and twenty-five members—one for every eleven hundred residents.

At present, the district—in Russian, the *raion*—remains the foundation of neighborhood politics. In Moscow, it is the fourth, and lowest, official level of government in a structure that used to command strict obedience from the top down, along the lines of the Party's hierarchy. Today, every level is trying to go its own way by carving out its own zone of autonomy, usually in direct defiance of higher authority. At the pinnacle of the crumbling pyramid is the government of the Soviet Union, headed by President Gorbachev. Then comes the Russian Republic, led by Boris Yeltsin, the maverick ex-Communist who in February accused Gorbachev of deceit and urged him to resign. (The two men recently arrived at a truce in an effort to rescue the economy.) The third step down is the Moscow City Council, most of whose seats were won in the elections of March, 1990, by a loosely organized



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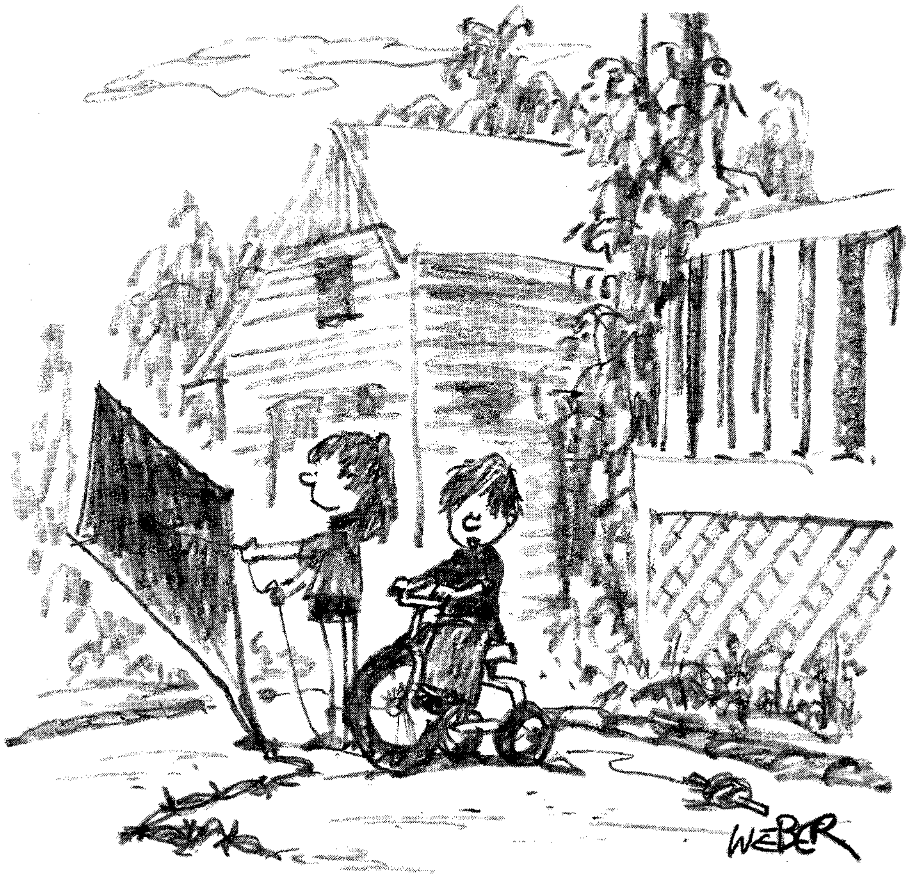

"*I can't wait to grow up and be happy.*"

reformist movement called Democratic Russia, which took the capital city out of the hands of the Communist Party apparatus and chose Popov, a rumpled, philosophical economist who believes in a free market, as its mayor; he has threatened to resign in frustration over his impotence in overcoming the resistance on high to more radical reforms.

At the fourth level—the district—the elections last year produced a crazy quilt of Communists, former Communists, and anti-Communists; radicals, moderates, and conservatives; democrats and autocrats; cautious socialists and adventurous businessmen. Now, however, political labels seem to matter less than political opportunism, as canny Communists have become ostentatiously democratic, and democrats have frequently shown an authoritarian streak. Some of the new politicians, eying the potential power of the people, have busied themselves trying to create a fifth level of government—the *mikroraion*, or microdistrict, where self-governing community councils composed of ordinary residents have been established in an effort to control their neighborhoods' garbage collection, food supplies, housing construction, and other services that have been neglected by the district, city, republic, and union governments.

Bolstering the self-governing council is Yashin's obsession. The day I first met him, he shook my hand and whisked me off on a frenetic walking tour of his neighborhood, the Presnya microdistrict, where about six thousand people live. As we threaded our way among unkempt courtyards and aging five-story buildings, he kept up a constant patter about problems and solutions; mostly solutions. Here, the self-governing council was arranging to put up an apartment house; there, a cultural-and-recreational complex with a swimming pool; over here, a roof for some tennis courts. And Tishinsky Market would be replaced by a trade center with a hotel, stores, and offices. Back in his own office, he and the chairman of the microdistrict's self-governing council, a thirty-nine-year-old non-Party man named Aleksei Rulyov, unrolled maps and diagrams of planned construction.

To obtain the authority for all this developing, Yashin has been evading the uncoöperative Krasno-Presnensky district authorities and has gone straight to the Moscow City Council, to which he was also elected in March, 1990. (One person can be in two legislatures simultaneously, and this policy has diluted talent by enticing some reformers into multiple jobs, which they don't have time to do well.)

So sour is Yashin's attitude toward the chairman of the District Council, a liberal non-Communist named Aleksandr Krasnov, that he refused to give me Krasnov's phone number. "He doesn't have any relations with us," Yashin said. "We even have skirmishes, confrontations. We have this small piece of territory, and in practical terms we're taking it away from them. Previously, they would have been able to construct some kind of factory on this land, let's say, but we say no. If you want to speak with the chairman of a *raisoviet*, it would be better not to do it here." (Nevertheless, I did it here, just three days later.)

As evidence of the microdistrict's success in circumventing the district, Rulyov proudly showed me a loose-leaf notebook containing agreements and orders issued by the city authorities enabling the self-governing council to go ahead with various projects. Given the authoritarian system of the past, there is a natural tendency to think that a permit represents power. But as Rulyov, Yashin, and others are discovering, they can't do anything without money. They keep agitating for a portion of the district's budget—so far, unsuccessfully. And Rulyov has other ideas about sources of income: bank credits, voluntary contributions to a social fund by local factories, investment by Western companies, the sale of stock in new retail and service enterprises, and profits from small businesses that the self-governing council can operate itself. For example, he said, the council would soon open an auto-service center to sell, rent, and repair cars.

"There is a stage of development where the people themselves begin to run the state," Yashin said. "You understand how important that is." I assured him that I did, and he continued. "I very much like a saying that someone told me: that a real democratic state is not one in which the government conducts correct policy but one in which the people govern themselves. You understand how important that is. That means the people are both the controllers and the architects of their society." His eyes were alive with the light of discovery.

He insisted that people's control would be accomplished by the self-governing councils, if only they could seize power from the moribund bureaucracies above. "I like very much what happened in one Western country, where, when a nuclear power plant was being constructed, people came and spoke about the dangers of the plant," Yashin said. He couldn't remember where it had occurred, but he recalled being pleased to hear that whoever was trying to build the plant began to make concessions to local residents. He imagined the offers in Soviet terms: "They said that the residents of this neighborhood would pay only four kopecks per kilowatt. 'We'll build you a garden, we'll build dispensaries, we'll give you passes to sanatoriums, we'll organize all the stores, and so forth. So there will be a lot for your residents if you let us build the station here.' It was not like here, where the administration just places a plant. More attention must be paid to the people's economic activities and to the interests of the population. And the population must take responsibility for the economic activity and the structure of government and industry."

Just as Yashin had his bases covered with Party, K.G.B., and democratic credentials, he had positioned himself at various levels of government—the City Council, the District Council, and the microdistrict's self-governing council—so that wherever power was ultimately distributed he would have a good chance of sharing in it. The power struggle was raging when I arrived, with Yashin and his self-governing council pitted against the district authorities. And the district government was at odds with itself: the legislative and executive branches fought constantly. The District Council found the Executive Committee obstructionist and dictatorial, and the Executive Committee saw the fledgling legislators as incessant talkers with no governmental skills.

"Of course, nobody wants to give up power over this territory," Yashin said. "On the contrary, they want to acquire it. Let's say that I go to you in the District Council. You're a deputy in the District Council. I say, 'Tell me, where did my money from the budget go?' You say, 'We built this and that.' I say, 'Let's go look at what you built and what we should be building.' You say, 'No, no time. I'm working. I'm busy.' If the money is in the hands of the self-governing council, I can go look over a building with people who live in that building." He paused for a moment, and then asked, "Where did they put the money all these years? It's nowhere. The self-governing authority can get more serious people, who know how to use this financing. Every day I go out of my house, and every day I come back home from work. I go out to walk my dog, I go out to walk with my children. I see constantly what's around my house and what is inside my house. You understand: people's control over the funds. A hundred people work in the district's Executive Committee. How can a hundred workers in the Executive Committee run a region of a hundred and fifty thousand? Of course they can't. It's simply unrealistic. That's why the self-governing council is more

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progressive. Each member can give concrete help to the population." His voice rose to an excited pitch. "The territory we just walked through can be considered our laboratory. This is where we are trying to test something altogether new."

Not altogether new, for Yashin also uses the Party organization as a model for the way the various soviets should be arranged. The soviets should reach down deep into the neighborhoods, he said, just as the Party has committees down to the level of each workplace. Indeed, the self-governing council in the microdistrict was originally a Party idea, put forward six years ago, which contributes to the suspicion with which it is viewed by many liberal members of Democratic Russia. Yashin defies the labels here, too, for his candidacy in the district and city elections was endorsed by Democratic Russia—a movement he now criticizes for its overblown rhetoric and inadequate performance in office. "The Bloc of Democratic Russia has become the Bloc of Demagogic Russia," he said, with his perpetual smile.

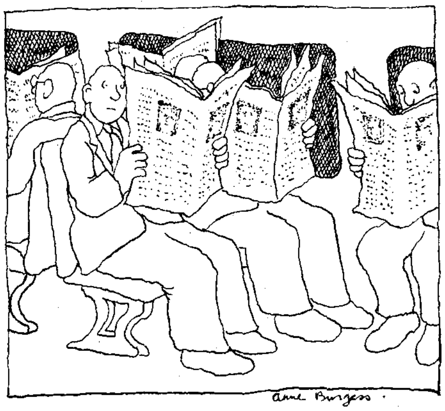
THE government of the Krasno-Presnensky district is housed in a red five-story building at 2 Shmitovsky Way, which is made to look moderately important by its location, adjacent to a park and set slightly apart from other structures. A little access road leading to the main door is kept clear of snow in the winter—the only small street in the entire district to receive such attention, as far as I could tell.

The two top floors are still occupied by the district committee of the Communist Party, which was nearly evicted last year by the council's newly elected democrats. In other sections of Moscow, the previous, Communist-dominated local councils had hurried to transfer ownership of dozens of buildings to the Party before the elections. But not here. A deal had to be made, so the Party traded away some space, spent a hundred and seventy thousand rubles on renovations, and got to keep the upper floors. The real engines of government—the Executive Committee and the District Council—were relegated to more proletarian offices, on the lower floors.

By physical appearance alone, the offices of the Party exude power, albeit power that is, at the moment, residual or latent. The ample waiting room outside the office of the First Secretary, Yuri Petrovich Prudnikov, is embellished with an ornate two-hundred-year-old French clock, standing eight or nine feet tall and crowned with a gilded cherub. The clock still chimes on the hour and half-hour, and was about to strike noon when I entered the First Secretary's huge office. Prudnikov came from behind his desk, which formed the top of a T at the end of a long polished wooden table. He was a neatly groomed, partly bald man of forty-three in a dark-blue suit, white shirt, and dark tie. He wore the flag pin that marked him as a deputy in the District Council. A large portrait of Lenin hung behind his desk, and one of Gorbachev on a side wall. But the real sign of prestige was the presence of a rare luxury in Moscow: two air-conditioners mounted in the windows.

Prudnikov spoke in a relaxed and open manner, talking candidly of the Party's electoral failures, its declining membership, its circumscribed role. He was not one to antagonize people, and even legislators who detested the Party and bickered with one another had praise for him. District Council deputies who usually chattered and argued among themselves while others had the floor grew quiet and attentive when Prudnikov addressed them. During a noisy council session the week after our conversation, he brought a hush to the chamber just by walking to the podium to say a few words. He was no longer in a position to run the district, as First Secretaries had been for decades, but his Communist Party remained intact and fairly influential. It was merely adjusting its behavior to the new, quasi-democratic politics and, perhaps, biding its time.

"Before 1985, there was not a single question that was decided without the participation of the district committee of the Party," he told me, referring to the year Gorbachev came to power. "We decided many administrative questions that affected our Krasno-Presnensky district concretely." Here, as throughout the Soviet Union, the government had been subordinate to the Party, the District Council had been a rubber stamp, and the Executive Committee had executed the Party's policies and decisions on day-to-day matters such as street-cleaning, housing renovation, school construction, and the distribution of food to stores.



"After 1985, we began to limit our administrative and political functions," Prudnikov said. "We placed administrative functions before the Executive Committee and began to become a purely political party."

When I asked for an example of something the Party no longer did, it was no surprise that he chose to cite the sensitive task of food distribution.

"The Party organization worked together with industries to obtain vegetables for our Krasno-Presnensky district," he said, explaining that local factories and other institutions had contributed to the construction and maintenance of storage facilities, set up stores, and arranged places for trucks to unload. "All that was basically the district committee of the Party—how does the unloading go, where are trucks required, and so forth. That's what we did, and we could direct and operate these processes through our Communists, who organized the district work. It has already been two years since we left this behind. Now the Executive Committee deals fully with these problems. Now the Executive Committee handles all questions that we dealt with. It is charged with guaranteeing the receipt and the storage of vegetables, without the participation or influence of the district Party organization. They're not getting results immediately, of course."

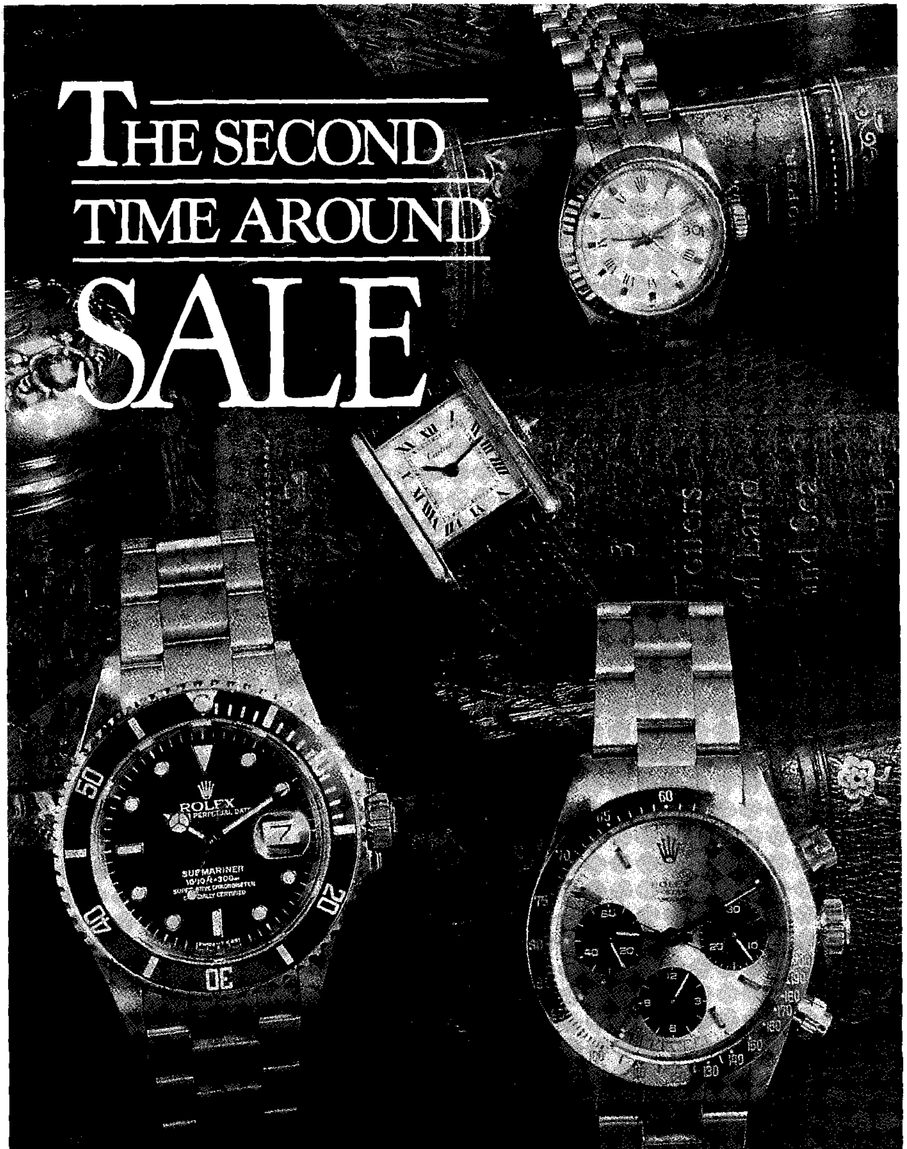
The results could be seen one morning on Krasina Street, in a store with a sign that said simply, "VEGETABLES, FRUIT." Inside, about twenty people, most of them women, were lined up buying apples from a white-coated clerk. Ignored, on the floor near pools of melting snow tracked in by shoppers, lay bags and bags of partly rotted potatoes and a few sacks of half-rotten carrots. A bin in the back contained a pile of large heads of cabbage; a man was picking them up, one at a time, turning them and poking them, to make a careful selection. Several net bags of fresh garlic sat on a table, and on a shelf were some glass jars of pickled tomatoes. That was it.

Krasina, which is a narrow street flanked by dull-ochre-colored apartment houses, was especially unpleasant to walk on that day, because the temperature had risen to just above freezing. The unshovelled sidewalks were ankle-deep in a muddy mixture of melting snow and the sandy soil that trucks spread on Moscow's slippery roads. Nevertheless, swarms of shoppers were out hunting for things to buy; one wondered when anybody worked.

At the corner of Krasina and the Sadovo Ring Road, a food store stood entirely depleted, like a relic of bankruptcy or war. Clean white cases, fronted with glass and ghostly in their emptiness, were guarded by a couple of saleswomen with nothing to do but push grimy mops back and forth across the tile floor. Passing Muscovites, inured to such spectacles of absence, would appear in the doorway, instantly take in the full meaning of the scene, and move on.

Food does arrive in stores from time to time, and I happened by a meat store on Krasnaya Presnya Street where a large crowd had gathered. Sides of beef were stacked behind one counter, and behind the other a butcher was using a gleaming meat axe to hack off pieces to be sold. It would have been no use trying to find recognizable cuts among the chunks, but that was no deterrent to the people in line. Clerks were checking to be sure the customers had "calling cards," the upscale term for identification cards issued by the district to its own residents to make sure that its stores did not cater to visitors from elsewhere in Moscow, or to interlopers in from the provinces to scour the capital's shops.

Store shelves in Moscow were never overflowing with desirable goods, but they used to be better stocked than the ones in most other Soviet cities. Several years ago, when severe shortages came to be felt here as well, a joke began to make the rounds of the capital. A man on a business trip to Moscow from an outlying town is asked by his wife to see what there is to buy. Notebook in hand, he enters a meat store, looks around, and jots down, "No meat." Then he goes to a fish store and writes, "No fish." He stops by a shoe store and



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AN ALARMING LACK OF PROGRESS IN CLEANUP.

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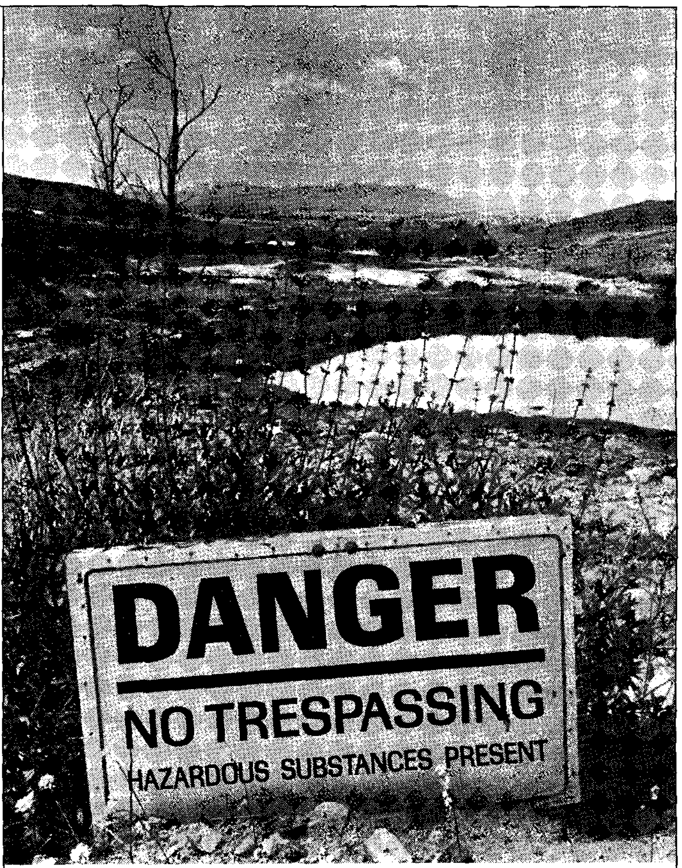
Now, after a decade of trying to make Superfund work, it's clear these assumptions were wrong and that a quick fix was never possible. What's wrong with Superfund and why has so little been accomplished?

The problem is twofold. First, the real scope of our nation's hazardous waste situation is far greater than Congress anticipated. With 1,200 priority sites already identified, growing numbers of sites are being found in every state. The Environmental Protection Agency expects that by the year 2000, there may be as many as 2,000 priority sites.

With rapidly rising cleanup costs, which now average about $25 million per site, the eventual price tag is staggering. According to a top government agency, cleaning up all of America's hazardous waste sites could take from 30 to 60 years and cost up to $500 billion!

A second problem is Superfund's alarming lack of progress in cleanup. A decade and billions of dollars later, fewer than 60 out of the 1,200 sites have actually been cleaned up.

Why? One major reason is Superfund's liability system. It requires that cleanup be paid for by establishing liability-who sent what waste, how much and where-and then negotiating or litigating with those believed to be responsible. While this sounds good in theory, it hasn't worked in practice. Instead, the result has been delayed cleanup and enormous legal, consulting and other costs unrelated to cleanup.



COMPOUNDING THE PROBLEMS INSTEAD OF SOLVING THEM.

This is because working out who pays and how much for cleanup is very difficult. Under Superfund, anyone who simply used or owned the site at any time could be liable for the entire cleanup bill. Users can include major corporations, small businesses, local governments, hospitals, nursing homes, schools, even individuals. And it does not matter who caused the harm or whether they did anything wrong. Superfund's retroactive

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liability provision makes parties pay for past actions based on today's standards.

For example, at 422 sites almost 14,000 parties have been notified that they could be liable. In turn, many of them are identifying still others who contributed in some way to the presence of waste at each site. And since Superfund liability deals with past waste disposal, the record of users can go back 25, 30 or even 40 years and can number in the hundreds.

The result? The focus on cleanup has been lost as private and public parties spend years in difficult but unavoidable negotiations and litigation, trying to work out agreements that would provide funds for cleanup. At some sites, more money has been spent resolving complex factual issues than on cleanup itself. This does a lot for lawyers and consultants, but very little for the environment. And of course, these costs are eventually passed on to all of us as consumers in higher prices for goods and services. Isn't it time to stop this wasteful process and get on with cleaning up our environment?

At AIG, we think so. There is little to be gained by arguing over waste disposal that happened long ago. America needs a system that will promote fast and effective cleanup, reduce unnecessary legal fees, spread the cost of cleanup broadly, and encourage responsible waste management practices today.

A PROPOSED SOLUTION:
THE NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL TRUST FUND.

To accomplish this, we have proposed creating a National Environmental Trust Fund, similar to the National Highway Trust Fund. Its resources would be used exclusively for cleaning up old hazardous waste sites. Superfund's tough liability provisions would still apply for future pollution, as would all other state and federal environmental laws designed to promote responsible waste management.

One way this fund could be financed would be by adding a separate fee to commercial and industrial insurance premiums in the United States. Even a modest assessment, say 2% of premiums and an equivalent amount for self-insureds, would provide about $40 billion over the next decade - more than enough to clean up the 1,200 highest-priority sites. Without endless time and money spent on legal debates about liability.

A national advisory board consisting of private individuals, industry and public officials could be charged with overseeing the program. We also suggest giving consideration to establishing local technical monitoring committees in each community. These groups of local citizens, representatives of industry and others would work with the Environmental Protection Agency and their own state on the particular cleanup site - from the very beginning of the cleanup effort.

YOU CAN HELP.

We've waited long enough and spent enough money in the courtrooms. Now it's time for action. A cleaner America should be all Americans' shared goal and shared responsibility.

To express your views, or if you would like further information about AIG's proposed National Environmental Trust Fund, write to Mr. M.R. Greenberg, Chairman, American International Group, Inc., 70 Pine Street, New York, NY 10270.

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scribbles, "No shoes." He feels a tap on his shoulder. It's a K.G.B. man. "Comrade, what are you doing?" the plainclothesman inquires. The visitor explains, and the K.G.B. agent says, "Don't you know that forty years ago you could have been shot for doing that?" The man with the notebook looks up, surprised, and then writes, "No bullets."

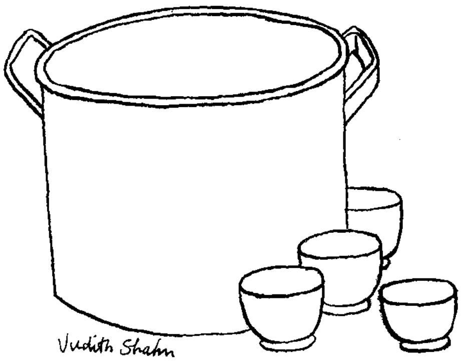
These days, Muscovites have trouble maintaining their humor in the long, demeaning lines. Nerves are rubbed raw, tempers flare. Outside a candy store, which had just closed for a lunch break, a clerk with a ballpoint pen moved along the line, writing numbers on the customers' hands to signify their positions, so they could go off and return later to take their rightful places. "I'm No. 3!" a woman shouted. "Write No. 3!"

"You are not!" others yelled, practically spitting the words. They jostled her, and she elbowed them, and the clerk, her face impassive, ignored her pleas and, in silence, wrote a double-digit number on the woman's outstretched hand.

Nevertheless, go to dinner at a Russian's apartment and you invariably find a room of merriment and a table groaning under dishes of herring, sardines, and smoked salmon; loaves of white bread and sour black bread; salads of shredded beets, tuna fish, or diced potatoes; marinated mushrooms and sliced salami; roast chicken or meat-filled dumplings; bottles of cognac, vodka, wine, Pepsi, and mineral water; ice cream or homemade cakes; and even coffee, which is expensive and scarce. "And they say Muscovites are dying of hunger," a middle-aged woman joked during a plentiful Saturday-night birthday feast.

"The stores are empty, but the refrigerators are full," a friend of mine remarked. "As usual," he added playfully, with a sense of history that is sometimes lost amid the upheavals of the moment. The disparity between stores and kitchens can be attributed to two Soviet instincts: hoarding and ferreting. Soviet citizens have learned to buy as much as possible of anything when it is available, which is partly why Muscovites now need ration coupons to buy sugar, tobacco, and alcohol. They have also learned that in their hapless economy the direct approach of walking naïvely into a store with only money in your hand rarely brings results. Connections are the essence of success. I know a man who gets meat from friends who siphon it off somehow from the distribution network, salami from a sister who works in a cafeteria, food packages through orders he can place at the school where he teaches, and cheese and yogurt at a special store open to him on Sundays because he has three children. Anyone who has three or more children or is a veteran of the Second World War is entitled to shop at such stores. Another acquaintance of mine gets monthly food packages of beef and chicken by virtue of having been a "repressed person"; that is, a prisoner in Stalin's labor camps.

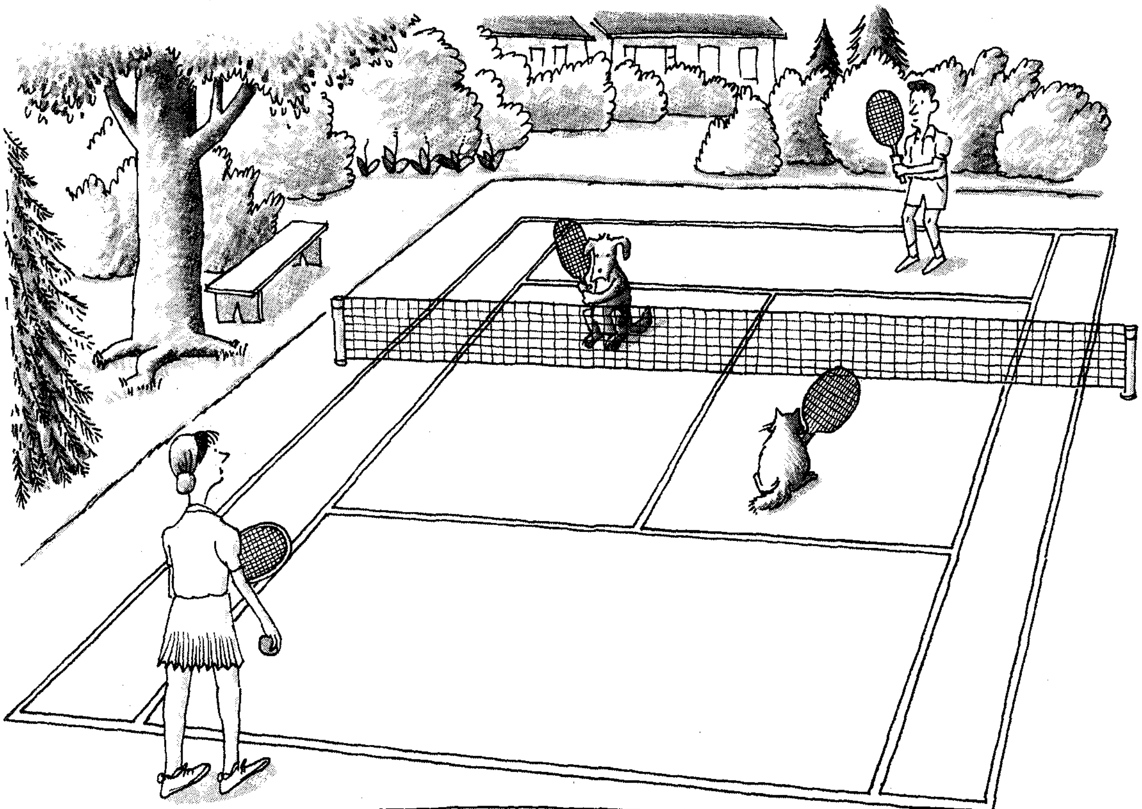
The long-standing system of ordering goods at workplaces promotes the intricate stratification of society, favoring those in military industries and other priority occupations. But such privileges are increasingly distributed now according to place of residence, by the district governments, in what has become almost literally pork-barrel politics. One sixty-two-year-old deputy in the Oktyabrsky district complained to a friend that he had labored for hours delivering heavy food packages from Germany to his constituents. He was exhausted. Others hand out *taloni*, or tickets, entitling residents to visit special stores that are supposed to be well stocked. Some people clamor for the tickets, but not all. I was having lunch at a friend's apartment one day when a district employee came to the door to give away tickets to a clothing store. The woman of the house declined, explaining that the last time she went with a ticket the line had been long, slow, and so quarrelsome that she finally gave up and went home. In another apartment house, a local official organized a lottery for a single ticket to a shop that sold gold. Most of the families participated, and the drawing was conducted in the stairwell with great glee and laughter. But an elderly woman told me that she had not taken part, because she did not have the stamina to wait in line if she won. She turned out to be right, for the neighbor who did win had to get to the store by seven o'clock in the evening and wait outside through a cold night for the privilege of buying some gold jewelry at the going price the next morning.



Some Soviet liberals who are in the mood for conspiracy theories speculate that Party conservatives are disrupting the distribution of food and other goods to make the newly elected democrats in various regions look incompetent. This seems entirely possible but not altogether necessary, for, Prudnikov observed, "we destroyed one structure, in which we worked, and another has not been created." The Party tries to use its contacts to help the district government ease food shortages, he said, because a sudden break with past practice would be unworkable. "So far, we haven't refused to help," he remarked. "As for the future, we'll probably move away from this."

The structure that has been destroyed—or, at least, severely damaged—is the administrative control that the Communist Party exercised along clear lines of command, from top to bottom. Gorbachev apparently understood that before an open political system could be established power had to be transferred from the Party to the parallel structure of government, which had obeyed the Party for seven decades, so he started to make the shift. But when Party rule was withdrawn and local elections were held, government began to come apart. And now he has tried to pull back to reinforce the Party's authority.

Simultaneously, the Party, which organized itself around the workplace, has begun to give way to a new political base—the place of residence. This arrangement is more democratic but less manageable, since an individual as a resident is not subject to the hierarchy that envelops him as a worker. Formerly, all candidates for legislatures (usually one for each seat) could be nominated only at workplaces. That meant that politics and government were largely divorced from neighborhood concerns. In last year's competitive elections, candidates were nominated by residents as well—a system that connected government with community. As a consequence, however, the transfer of power from the Party



MIXED DOUBLES

• •

to the government has been incomplete and unsuccessful. While political authority has shifted, it has also fragmented, with local governments vying for authority, usually along ethnic and geographic lines. The result has been a very fluid, almost chaotic period, in which laws are enacted and ignored, personal pull is enhanced, corruption thrives, and policy based on ideas seems unattainable.

Communists may profit from this, partly because many non-Communists elected with Democratic Russia's support seem more interested in talking than in governing. Few are inclined to immerse themselves in the tedium of drawing up budgets and administering agencies. By contrast, Communists who have been in government all along tend to enjoy the machinations of running bureaucracies. In this atmosphere, conservative Communists have begun to refer derisively to "democrats" in the same way that conservative Republicans expressed contempt for "liberals" during the last Presidential campaign—as mush-brained blabbermouths who don't know what's good for the country.

Therefore, the Party no longer appears doomed, as it did a year ago; the hemorrhage of Party members' resignations has been stemmed. Even so, new membership in the Krasno-Presnensky district remains low. "It has been significantly less," Prudnikov said. "Significantly less. I try to meet with everyone who enters the Party, and there are some very interesting young people, committed youngsters, but significantly fewer. We used to accept a thousand Communists annually; now we take about two hundred and fifty. About three thousand Communists have left the Party. In all the Party organizations in the district today, there are thirty-five thousand members. That is a large Party organization. But the process now is stabilizing. The peak of resignations from the Party came in September, October, and November of last year."

Prudnikov's secretary brought tea, in glasses nestled in silver-colored metal holders with graceful handles. "I think that gradually the Party is turning into a political organization, a purely political organization," Prudnikov continued as he took a sip. "I would suggest that the accent of our basic activity should be transferred to parliamentary action—work with voters, who, of course, shape the election of deputies who define all levels of power." He complained that during last year's local elections, the first in which the Party had not reserved seats for itself, it campaigned poorly. "It organized the elections," he said. "It organized election commissions, prepared polling places. But we didn't get involved with political work. We didn't support our own candidates, and we wasted time. The natural results were that the elections were organized well but the candidates didn't get in. For us it was a complicated process. We began delicately. We were afraid to express any kind of categorical judgment that might seem like some sort of pressure on this process. We drew back from this a little bit—well, more than a little bit—and therefore the results of the elections for us, in the Communist Party, were not comforting."

Prudnikov barely made it himself. In the first round, he defeated his opponent, a policeman, by only thirty votes, he said. But the balloting was declared invalid, because fewer than fifty per cent of the eligible voters had participated. Shrewdly, Prudnikov switched to an adjacent election precinct (candidates do not have to live in the precincts where they run), and, in a runoff, defeated a young pediatrician who was not a Party member.

His victory went against the citywide trend, where anti-Communist sentiment was running strong. "The elections came in a wave of opposition to the Party," Prudnikov observed. And in reaction, he said, "we are now orienting the work of the district committee of the Party, as an electoral organ, toward the microdistricts." The purpose, as he sketched it, was to put down stronger political roots and show the population concrete results. Here was where the self-governing councils came in. "I think they have good prospects," Prudnikov declared. "The question today is: Who is on this self-governing council, and how is this self-governing council organized? You know, an enthusiast appeared, he surrounded himself with people, and they organized a committee, and they called this committee a self-governing council, and they began to work. In the long term, I think they should be elected; then they would have a certain authority. But we have supported them from the very beginning, when they were born with our help."

A DAY later and three floors down, I was given quite a different view of the microdistricts' attempts to organize from Aleksandr Krasnov, the chairman of the District Council; he is a bald, thirty-five-year-old non-Communist who belonged to Democratic Russia and had no portraits of Lenin or Gorbachev on his walls. He wore glasses, a red tie, white socks, and a powder-blue suit that seemed a defiant repudiation of the dark tones that still prevailed in this building, even under *perestroika*. Krasnov had an easy manner, but it was clear that he was jealous of his new authority and did not welcome competition.

"So far, the self-governing councils have not put themselves on the positive side of things," he said. "First, this is not a level of soviet power; it is a social organization. That must be understood. It is not power. It is a social formation that can transmit the viewpoints of residents. But this is not power. They were not elected. This is a group of people who unite among themselves and use a certain lack of regulations and a vacuum in the laws. They want to grab a part of the land and buildings and enter into agreements with firms to rent buildings and land in some kind of commercial activity. They do not entirely reflect the interests of the local residents. They cannot fulfill functions of power, they cannot do building renovations, they cannot do construction. It is a group of people who want to receive profits from what is situated in their locality, using the completely unregulated situation that now exists. They don't have any legislative rights to realize what they propose. They just have hot wishes."

One danger Krasnov saw was a tendency for the local legislator to become a lobbyist on behalf of his constituents' narrow interests. "He must receive information about what is happening, collect letters, talk to the executive branch, convey complaints and applications, but not push further himself," Krasnov said. "That would be the worst form of lobbying. One deputy would be strong, the other weak; it shouldn't depend on that. Your senators receive masses of applications. Nobody says that they should go to Congress with every letter demanding the passage of a new law, or go to the President and say, 'Here, voters have written about something that's bad, and you need to resolve this.' In such a situation, nothing would ever be resolved. I know the theory of the establishment of three branches of power, and it must be exactly thus. The deputy cannot proceed on the basis of his voters' concerns and move into executive power."

Ironically, however, Krasnov himself had entered politics, in 1990, along the route of narrow community interests, by spearheading local opposition to the construction of a second office building for the International Trade Center. Neighborhood residents focussed on the damage it would do to Krasno-Presnensky Park, next to the site. Under the old regime of centralized decision-making, the neighborhood's views were not solicited, and the city government, under pressure from the central government, approved the expansion. Krasnov, a geophysicist who had worked on the construction of a supercollider and various subway systems, used his opposition to the project to get elected to the District Council, which then chose him as its chairman. Over his objection, the council ultimately approved the building, but it demanded that the Trade Center pay four million dollars to renovate the park and add amenities.

Once Krasnov became enmeshed in broader responsibilities, he took to the role with alacrity. Unlike a good many others in the democratic movement, he seemed genuinely enamored of the process of governing. When I asked him what he had learned in this job that had surprised him, I expected him to discuss social problems or politics, but instead he talked about getting to have frequent meetings with Gorbachev, Yeltsin, and other high officials. "I never expected that even under *perestroika* the head of a district that wasn't large, despite its importance, would have access to such a level of leadership," he said, his eyes bright with wonder. "For me, this was unexpected, but it is very pleasant to have discussions with Gorbachev, Yeltsin, and so forth. For me, it's a surprise—a pleasant surprise."

I asked if he would run for reëlection in 1995.

"I like this work, but there are still four years to go, so I don't know," Krasnov replied. Whereas some democrats were already saying a flat no, having decided to get out of politics at the next election, Krasnov knew he enjoyed government. "If I feel I have to change my place of work, perhaps to move into the executive branch, I might have a chance to go to the Council of Ministers of the Russian Republic, or to the city Executive Committee," he said. "If I see that I can be of use, I'll go there."

His ambition had honed his sensitivity to others who were hunting for political power, much as Muscovites had to hunt for food. Power, the new politicians had discovered, was not available openly on the shelves; getting elected to a legislature did not mean obtaining authority automatically, for legislatures had never had any strength before. You had to maneuver for it, pull strings for it, use privilege and connections, and scheme, steal, and bribe your way through the intricacies of a rapidly changing landscape where no system existed anymore, where no law, regulation, or procedure guaranteed the acquisition of political influence. And as new as Krasnov was to all this, he could smell a rival. When I mentioned the name of Mikhail Mikhailovich Yashin, Krasnov did not raise his voice, but he spoke bluntly.

"Mikhail Mikhailovich serves as a deputy in the Moscow City Council, and he tries to receive some kinds of papers from the apparatus to give him agreements on this or that building," Krasnov said. "But not everything can be realized, because no agreement with them has been concluded, and we have not received any papers. We do not consider any orders from above. If the Central Committee of the Party or the Council of Ministers sends something, we don't consider it. We consider only what we do ourselves."

The district and the microdistrict were at odds over what to build where. Tishinsky Market had been earmarked by the district for a stock exchange and by the microdistrict for a complex of stores, offices, and a hotel. On another site, housing was at the top of the microdistrict's desires, but Krasnov saw a need there for a school and a children's medical clinic. Clearly, however, the conflict was more about power than priorities. On the merits, I asked, what did Krasnov think of Yashin's proposal for an underground garage and a new apartment building?

"The project doesn't exist," Krasnov declared. "It doesn't exist. What exists are pretty pictures, on which it is said that there will be this, that, and the other thing. I spoke with Mikhail Mikhailovich about this. Who is going to pay money for this? Unknown. Who is going to build this project? Unknown. Where is the inspection documentation for this project? There isn't any. Where is the agreed-upon space where it will be located? Not agreed upon. Mikhail Mikhailovich is a big enthusiast for work, but he has never worked as a builder—he doesn't know how to build, how to get financing. He is a captain in the Committee of State Security—that's his work. The house in which he lives is basically Committee of State Security people. They have their wishes, and he reflects their interests. I wouldn't say the interests of the Party but, rather, the interests of a group of people who named themselves a self-governing council and want a piece of power." (Later, Yashin told me that Krasnov was always getting his building confused with a K.G.B. apartment house down the street.)

In a sense, the microdistrict is doing nothing more than what the district has tried to do; namely, to grab control of its own fate, sometimes in awkward and unrealistic ways. This satisfies the impulse to break out of the larger society's conservatism, even if it means going alone. For example, Krasnov wants to require emission-control equipment in any automobiles that drive in district territory, and he is prepared to establish checkpoints and fines, he said, "so that people with unregulated engines will be afraid to travel through our region."

Similarly, the district is trying to increase control over its own finances. Taxes are now collected at the district level and then forwarded upward. Some six hundred to seven hundred million rubles are taken in by Krasno-Presnensky annually, Krasnov explained, of which the district is al-

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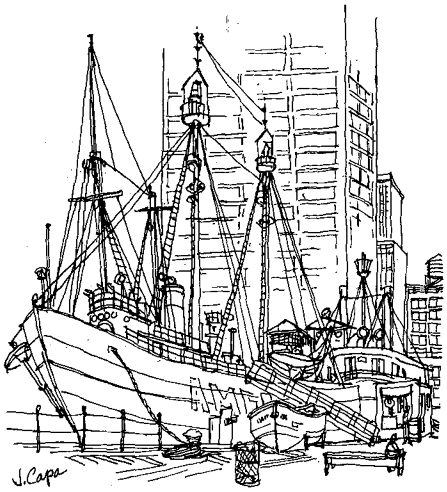
lowed to keep forty million for its budget. Part of this is paid to doctors, teachers, and policemen as monthly bonuses, to attract high-calibre people. "We're relatively displeased that the budget is formulated from above," he said. "But, nevertheless, our district is not resentful. We have so many unregulated sources that we can be richer than other districts. This problem worries us very little." Krasnov's "unregulated sources"—a misnomer, since nothing but the black market is truly unregulated—include Western ventures and private Soviet enterprises. He wants to move quickly to put stores and housing into private hands, and is hoping that the district can use its central location to attract Western business. Some new political activists imagine themselves sitting on a pot of gold if the central government ever lowers the barriers to foreign investment. That had been Aleksei Rulyov's explanation of why he was satisfied to be chairman of the self-governing council of the Presnya microdistrict, and had not tried to become a district legislator, which would have precluded him from making money from private ventures. He had rubbed his fingers together and grinned.

The lust for the free market runs up against a strong countercurrent in Soviet society, however. For many Soviet citizens, including even some liberal politicians, the notion of individuals' making profits triggers a revulsion on ethical grounds. It seems simply immoral for someone to charge handsome amounts for scarce services, or to buy goods at one price and sell them for more, even if consumers are willing to pay. This aversion is now a centerpiece of the arguments being made by conservatives, such as Prime Minister Valentin Pavlov, who have recently been brought into office by Gorbachev. Some have suggested that Soviet entrepreneurs are trying to sell Mother Russia, and Pavlov and others have accused Westerners of fantastic plots: hoarding rubles in an effort to undermine the Soviet economy; conducting industrial espionage; shipping the Soviet Union tainted grain. The K.G.B. has been authorized to seize the assets and the books of coöperative enterprises and joint foreign-Soviet ventures if wrongdoing is suspected. None of this can possibly encourage the risk-taking that is required of prospective businessmen, whether Soviet or foreign, if private enterprise is to develop, even in restricted form. In recent weeks, Pavlov has tried to undo some of the damage by supporting legislation to protect foreigners' investments, but the over-all climate remains far from reassuring to entrepreneurs.

The conservative side of Gorbachev's political personality is nothing new to Krasnov and other liberals. "He isn't changing," Krasnov said. "Western figures thought that he was a big democrat, but a long time ago we saw—we understood and spoke about—the fact that he isn't such a democrat or as kind a person as he is represented in the West." Nevertheless, Krasnov did see evidence that Gorbachev's recent moves had emboldened reactionaries in the Executive Committees who were in a position to foil the new legislatures' liberal initiatives. "The right has gone on the attack, and we feel this problem every day," Krasnov said. "Their stronghold is the city Executive Committee. They behave outrageously, doing absolutely nothing to fulfill decisions made by the deputies, if the decisions do not coincide with their interests." So the Krasno-Presnensky district may have to wait awhile before the economic boom.

THE boom in free speech has already come to the district, however, and, unlike free enterprise, it does not seem susceptible to Gorbachev's control. The question that plays on the minds of citizens is whether it can ultimately be stifled or has now passed the point of no return.

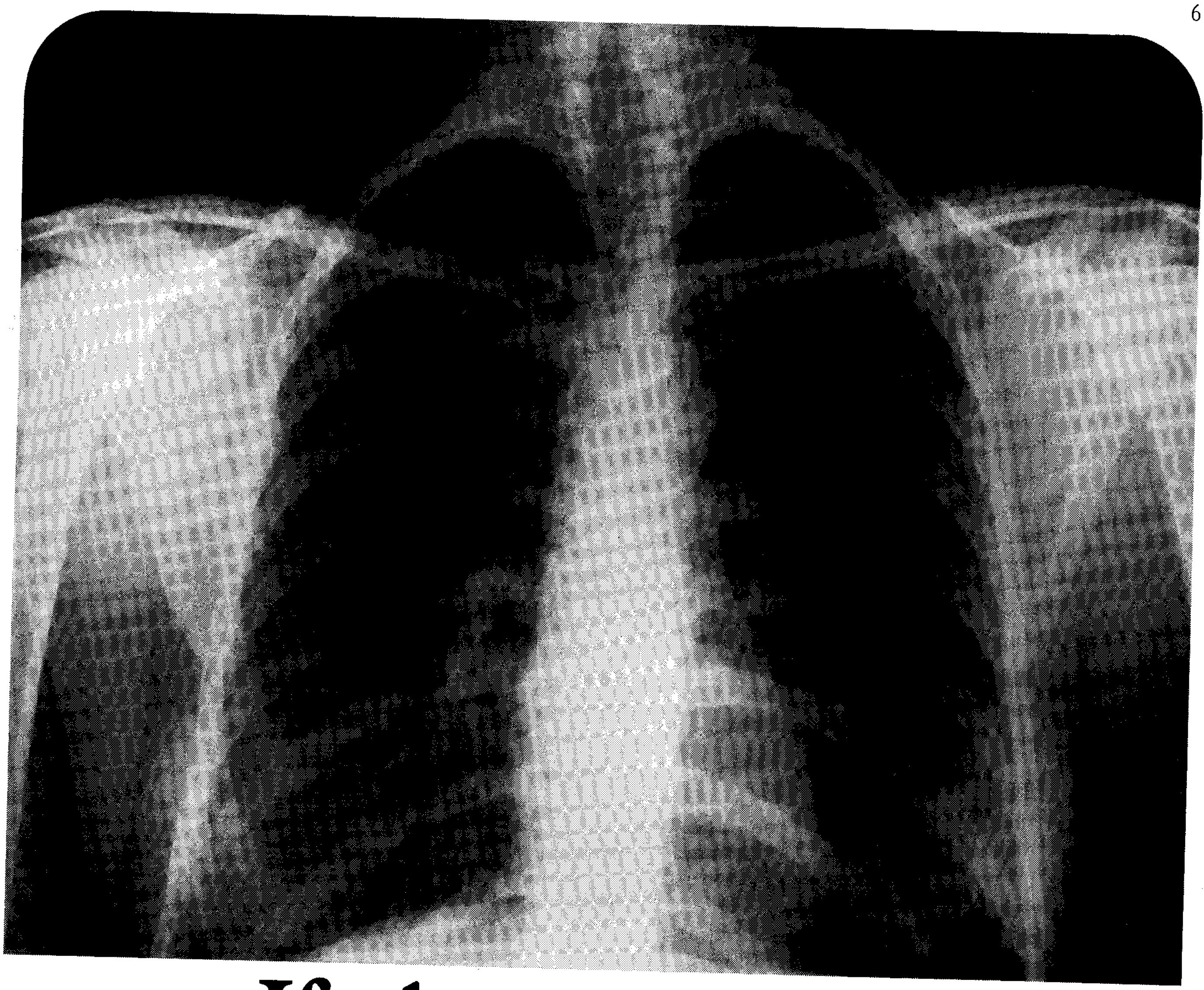
On March 28th, just inside the district's line, some hundred thousand protesters gave a preliminary answer by defying a twenty-day ban that Gorbachev had ordered on demonstrations. Earlier, the Moscow City Council had insisted that a rally supporting Boris Yeltsin would go ahead despite the prohibition, and Gorbachev had reacted by taking over the Moscow city police force, thereby circumventing the constitutional restrictions on executive power which he and the Congress of People's Deputies had carefully constructed a year before. But neither the policemen nor a force of fifty thousand troops and military vehicles could do anything more than prevent the marchers from reaching the Kremlin; instead, the rally was moved to Mayakovsky Square, just over a mile away. It was a demonstration not only of Gorbachev's unpopularity but also of his weakness—his inability to curb what he himself had set loose.



The spirit of free inquiry that Gorbachev had encouraged was on display one afternoon at School No. 20 in the Krasno-Presnensky district. I had asked Yashin to arrange a visit, and he accompanied me to the mustard-colored building just inside the Sadovo Ring Road. We spoke first with the deputy principal, Olga Lanskaya, who told us that the school was now free to devise its own curriculum. In literature, for example, students were reading previously banned authors, including Bulgakov, Akhmatova, Mandelstam, and Pasternak. "We used to study collectivization as a good thing for society," she said. "Now we're studying it from different viewpoints. The civil war"—following the Bolshevik Revolution—"is not only an expression of heroism but also of violence and death."

The students we met seemed less impressed by their curriculum and less exhilarated by the relative freedom. It must have felt natural to them to be able to speak their minds. They were sixteen years old, after all, which meant that since age twelve or so they had tasted the fruits of Gorbachev's *glasnost*, and they wanted more.

Fifteen students sat around a square table. Yashin introduced me, and then introduced himself, listing all his positions, right down to "employee of the Committee of State Security." I winced, thinking that this would inhibit the youngsters from expressing their opinions. I was wrong. A few of them smirked or giggled, and that turned out to be the only impact the K.G.B. presence had on them. In an hour's discussion, they presented themselves as unfettered advocates of radical reform. When one boy asserted that

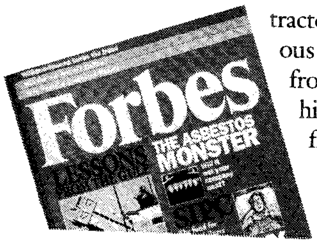


If a doctor can't find asbestos damage here, a lawyer will.

These days, asbestos litigation is fast becoming a giant grab bag. And nobody's grabbing more than America's personal injury lawyers. These opportunists are rounding up workers all across the country, herding them into vans equipped with x-ray and breathing machinery, and examining them for traces of asbestos-related disease.

The lawyers who invented this screening technique brought suits in 12 states on behalf of 8,000 tire workers. Yet in a May 1990 opinion, a Kansas City district judge called their litigation project "a professional farce…The process makes a mockery of the practices of law and medicine."

As Forbes pointed out in a February 18th cover story, it's not just lawyers that are at fault, but the vagueness of the law itself. Consider the case of a mechanic who had occasional contact with tractor parts containing not-so-dangerous chrysotile asbestos. When he died from cancer, lawyers saw to it that his wife received a large settlement from the companies that made those parts. But in all likelihood, his death was caused by deadly amphibole asbestos, which he was exposed to when he worked at a naval shipyard during World War II.



Right now, the U.S. has 115,000 pending asbestos cases. Forbes has learned that between 65% and 80% of the claimants involved in them have symptomless maladies unrelated to asbestos. Then why is it that asbestos claims have already forced 15 companies into bankruptcy? And why is it that litigation could end up costing companies, and their insurers, as much as $100 billion?

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every republic should have the right to secede, I asked if anyone disagreed. Nobody spoke, so I asked for a show of hands: How many thought that every republic should have the right to secede? Every hand went up. Yashin looked surprised. A girl endorsed unrestricted private property and free enterprise. A boy supported her. I invited someone to disagree. When nobody did, and others expressed agreement, I asked for a hand to be raised by anyone who thought there should be some kind of limit on private property. Not a single hand went up. Nobody? Then a blond boy suggested, as a second thought, that defense industries and gold mines should remain under state ownership.

I was interested in what they were studying in Soviet history now. At the end of the 1987-88 academic year, after Gorbachev inspired a spate of truthtelling about the crimes of Stalin, history examinations were cancelled, because nobody knew what the right answers were. The old textbooks omitted the mass arrests and executions, the purge of the Party and the officer corps, the famine in the Ukraine, and other events of Stalin's rule. The dictator's transgressions were sanitized into the lone criticism that he had fostered a "cult of personality."

The students told me that they had new textbooks, published in 1989, but that they were the same as the old ones.

Surely they contained indictments of Stalin, I said.

"They criticize Stalin," one girl acknowledged. "But they say Lenin is very good." The negative side of Lenin should also be taught, she insisted.

"And they say only good things about the Revolution," another girl said. "It would be better if they were written with two points of view on the Revolution. They should say the bad things as well."

A boy jumped in: "They should give both sides, so you can make up your own mind."

But can't you start such a discussion in class?

There was a chorus of noes as the teen-agers tumbled over each other to complain that the teacher was anxious only for them to memorize facts and dates, not to think for themselves.

On the door of the classroom was a picture of Andrei Sakharov, the late human-rights activist. In the main hall stood a large marble bust of Lenin.

SOME Soviet citizens are convinced that the outspokenness could be eradicated by political arrests and other intimidation if Gorbachev—or, more likely, a reactionary successor—should decide to employ the vast police machinery at his disposal. But others recognize what they call an "internal revolution" in themselves, and they believe that it cannot be reversed—at least, not at any price the authorities are willing to pay.

One man, in his thirties, confided to me that in a former role, as a leader in Komsomol, the Communist Youth League, he used to choose only the most politically orthodox young people to meet with foreign delegations. He made certain that they would lie and say that everything in the Soviet Union was good and fine. Now he himself is a critic who supports a more radical advance toward democracy and a free economy, and insists that he could never return to what he was before.

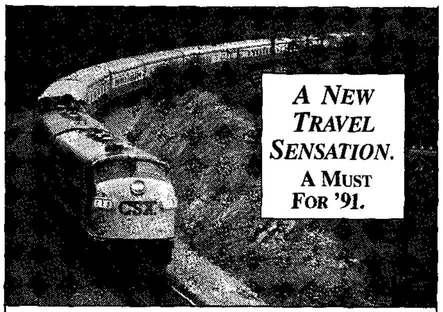
After he had known me about a week, Vladimir Tikhonov, the street-cleaner turned legislator, relaxed enough to open up in the same vein. "I was afraid of meeting you, because of what the K.G.B. might think," he told me. "For seventy years, this has been bred in us. It's difficult to get rid of. It is an illness. I'm not shy about saying it. We've suffered through fear."

Did he think the liberalization could be turned back?

"It's an irreversible process," he said. "People have a free soul now. It's a hard time but nevertheless a happy time. The free spirit compensates for the deficiencies in food, and so forth. The process of democracy is a living organism. It has just been born. It has to grow."

The growing pains are acute. A Moscow friend of mine remarked a few years ago that he had always known there was a great distance between no freedom of speech and freedom of speech. What he now realized was that the distance was just as great between freedom of speech and freedom of action.

The "democrats" have had trouble organizing into coherent blocs to pass legislation or execute policy, and this failure has weighed as heavily on them as the competition from the Party. Krasnov, for instance, had no com-



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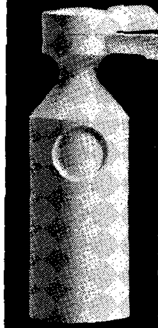

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plaint about the Communist Party committee in his district. "We have practically no problems," he said. "They don't interfere in the work of the council. They're busy with their Party affairs." But he was bothered by the inability of his fellow-reformers, who have scattered themselves among some fledgling parties, to get together. The concept of "party discipline" has been discredited by the Communists after long years of employing it as a tool to silence debate. Therefore, when leaders of the new parties call for party discipline on the floor of a legislature many of their members bridle. Nikolai Ilyich Travkin, who heads the Democratic Party and has been trying to whip it into shape, is referred to derisively by some liberals as another Nikolai (after the last czar) and the third Ilyich (after Vladimir Ilyich Lenin and Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev).

Some of the problems were illustrated by an argument that erupted one morning in a corridor of the district government building. I was talking with Nadezhda Belyaeva, a Communist deputy, historical archivist, and young mother of three. She had blond hair in a loose braid that hung down her back, and wore a black-and-white cardigan fastened with laces across her stomach, making her look like a Russian *matryoshka*—the dolls that nest one inside another. She was recalling her faithful activism as a Communist Party loyalist, as a leader in Komsomol, and as the head of the Party's local branch of the Knowledge Society, which arranges propaganda lectures.

"I remember when every speech had to begin with a paean to Brezhnev," she said disgustedly, and she described the doubts that crept into her thinking during the opening years of Gorbachev's rule. I asked why she remained in the Party. "I was going to leave the Party last summer," she said. "When fall came, our deputies in the district held meetings for voters, but only about twenty people came to my meetings. Many of the Party people in the district were sympathetic to me, and I thought, Why should I separate myself from such good people?" She reinforced her decision with a little nod to what the Party stood for. "Lenin is a very revered figure," she declared. "He made mistakes, like any genius. This is our history; you can't forget it. Lenin was a real genius."

"Hitler was also a genius," quipped

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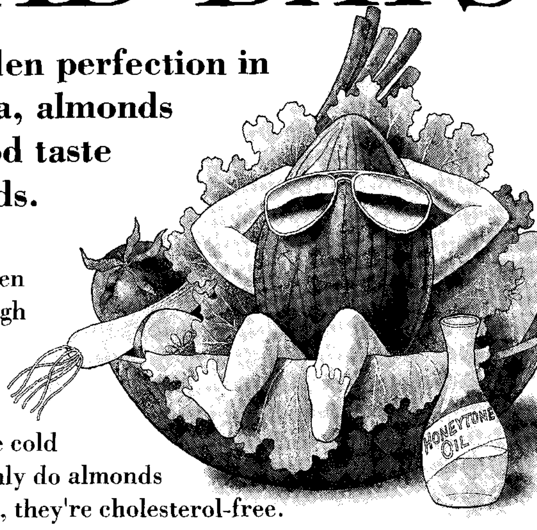

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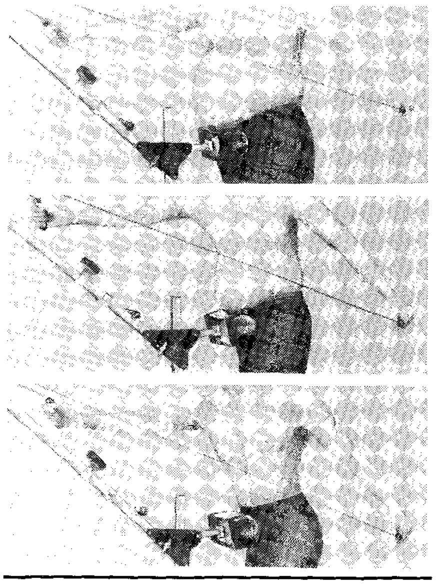

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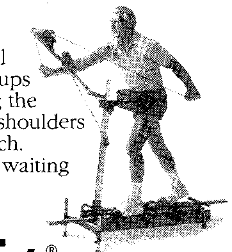

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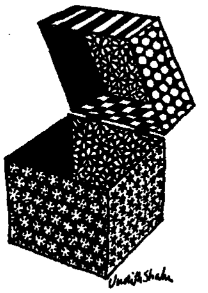
Arkady Agolakov, another deputy, who had been listening with a half smile. He had resigned from the Party last summer, after more than two decades of membership, and now he threw himself into a debate with Belyaeva about Bolshevism, democracy, and tyranny.

The three of us were soon joined by a radical deputy, Tatiana Tsilvik, a taller blonde, who didn't mince words. She detested the Communist Party and said so regularly. "When the Party Secretary says do it, they do it," she said. "Our deputies are of a very low culture, illiterate. They're used to being told what to do."



"There are intelligent people," Belyaeva offered.

"They are completely unintelligent people," Tsilvik snapped. "The trouble with the Communists is that they're always organizing to push their own interests."

Yes, I said, and that's what the democrats need to do.

"But we should organize around *ideas*," she pleaded.

Well, I said, that would be nice, but if you look at parliaments in the West you'll see groups organizing around their own interests. That's the way democracy works.

"But the Communists are criminal," Tsilvik declared.

Belyaeva bristled. "What in my activities is criminal?" she demanded, and started to walk away.

"I don't know," Tsilvik said. "But you have this group that has such a terrible history."

Belyaeva came back. "You don't have the right to call yourselves democrats," she said.

I tried to revive the question of how to organize, and Tsilvik answered by insisting, "The democrats have united, around Yeltsin."

"Poor Yeltsin," Belyaeva shot back. "He's of such low culture."

Thus did opposing legislators conduct their discourse.

THE chairman of the Krasno-Presnensky district's Executive Committee was Valery Pshenov, a dapper, energetic bureaucrat with a mustache and a full head of salt-and-pepper hair. He could be seen dashing busily in and out of offices as he tried to administer the affairs of the district without yielding excessively—or at all, some would say—to the wishes of the District Council. That made him the council's prime target, and he was about to learn a hard lesson in the wages of democracy.

Pshenov was not an old man, but he was a Party man of the old school, an experienced apparatchik from the city Party committee who had impressed the new deputies soon after the elections. He had persuaded a majority of them to choose him for this job, which was roughly equivalent to town manager. By all accounts, however, he had proceeded to act as if nothing had changed in the Soviet Union. He would not adjust to the notion that the council, of which he was also a member, had real governing authority; he tried to ignore it, as it had been ignored before. Despite a legislative desire to encourage private business coöperatives in the district, Pshenov's bureaucracy entangled entrepreneurs in yards of red tape, making it hard for them to register and obtain permission to operate. He met infrequently with deputies, disregarded their priorities, and issued orders that rode roughshod over the wishes of their constituents. Last November, he even told a council session that he would consult with deputies only when he saw fit. He and Krasnov developed such bitter relations that they almost never spoke to each other, Krasnov told me, although their offices opened into a common waiting room.

For months, the council had been gearing up to oust Pshenov. And now, shortly before ten o'clock on a Monday morning, the process was beginning. Most of the deputies were entering the lobby of the district building, at 2 Shmitovsky Way, handing their hats and coats to two elderly women who tended the cloakroom, and talking excitedly as they drifted along a corridor toward the auditorium where they were to hold their session. The room had many more seats than necessary, rows and rows upholstered in red; the legislators, who numbered a hundred and twenty-five, dispersed themselves throughout the hall. Behind the stage, a light-colored wooden wall was nearly covered with a huge flag of the Russian Republic. There was no picture of Lenin.

Yashin took me in with him, introduced me around, and had me sit among the deputies. It was clear that cliques had developed. Those who enjoyed one another's company clustered together, chatted, laughed, made wisecracks, and generally had a good time. Party affiliation seemed irrelevant to the definitions of these informal groups; the one I spent most of the first day with included not only Yashin, the loyal Communist, but also Tikhonov, the non-Communist; Arkady Agolakov, the ex-Communist; and Tatiana Tsilvik, the anti-Communist. What they all shared was an avowed passion for opening up the system, and a distrust of the authoritarian impulses that still ran through government.

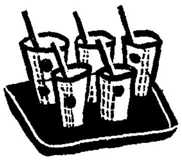
Hostility to Pshenov had united diverse people in the council. Three loose factions had recently been formed, and bore names that gave no clue to their identity: Community, comprising thirty or forty Communists; Position, comprising about fifteen leftist democrats; and Solidarity, comprising some fifteen entrepreneurs and owners of coöperative businesses. All three wanted Pshenov out. Some deputies had tried to oust him last fall, but had been able to muster only thirty-eight votes, far short of the two-thirds required to dismiss an official who had been elected by the council. Therefore, a new tactic was now being used. The legislators would restructure the district government to eliminate Pshenov's position, in effect, and render the Executive Committee unambiguously subordinate to the council.

Photocopies of the proposal, on a single sheet with text and diagram, were handed to the deputies as they entered the auditorium. The plan called for the creation of a third deputy chairman of the council (there were already two), who would also, automatically, serve as the chairman of the Executive Committee. Thus, in the organization chart the uppermost box represented the District Council; next came the Presidium of the council, within which the chairman of the council was shown; and beneath were the three deputy chairmen, with the Executive Committee attached to the newest deputy chairman like a tiny appendage.

This did not exactly conform to the principle of checks and balances among coequal branches of government, which Krasnov had told me he endorsed. But he and his colleagues were not engaged in an academic exercise; it was a power struggle, and they were happy to put this particular executive branch directly under the control of this particular legislature.

Krasnov, in his powder-blue suit and white socks, took his place on the stage with the two deputy chairmen and convened the session, at ten-fifteen. Almost all the deputies were men, most of them in dark suits, with a few in casual sweaters and one, a young newspaper editor, in a black leather jacket; there were only about ten women. Two microphones, one in each aisle, were set up for speakers from the floor, but the one on the left didn't work; it gave out a loud hum, so it was turned off, and until it was repaired, late in the day, people in that aisle had to shout. This added to the raucous nature of the gathering, in which the inhibitions of decades were shed in an orgy of derisive denunciations, angry arguments, personal attacks, and other forms of free speech.

The sense of liberation did not appear to bring much delight to the deputies, however. The debate was so raw, the procedures were so unpolished, the contempt for differing views was so heavy that the atmosphere grew thick with intolerance. Everybody was talking, nobody was listening. Hardly anyone displayed any interest in anyone else's opinion, or any openness to the possibility of being persuaded by an opposing view. As one deputy spoke, others talked among themselves, often greeting an unwelcome statement with smirks and laughter. Like naughty schoolchildren with a permissive substitute teacher, they seized the chance to create an uproar, and then did not appear to like themselves very much for it. Many of them told me later that they found the session unseemly. "How do you like our circus?" one asked me with a sour smile. "What an ugly spectacle," another said. "Chaotic," "uncivilized," "illiterate," and "vulgarized" were the words they used to describe their legislature and its members.



"Frankly speaking, this democratic idea has been vulgarized," Aleksandr Voluchkov complained, turning around in his seat, in the row in front of me. He was a museum director, an elderly man with gray hair and a kindly face. "It has been vulgarized, and people are already drifting away from this word 'democrat,' because there are so many democratic statements, so many democratic struggles, so many democrats came into power—they turned out to be frauds, yes? We are all guilty. We pronounce the word 'democracy.' The word 'democracy,' first of all, is lawfulness. But we became the enemies of legality. We decided that the law was bad. We're not creating anything new; we're just rejecting."

The first item on the agenda, of course, was the reorganization plan and the fate of Pshenov. The chairman of the commission that drew up the proposal told the deputies that they were in the best position to convey information from residents to the Executive Committee. "This structure has been in effect for seventy years," he said. "Some districts have liquidated the Executive Committee entirely. We haven't gone that far. We want to keep it, but make it subordinate to the soviet."

A vote was taken on the first of a series of procedural questions. Yashin, who was gossiping with those around him, saw hands go up, raised his own as well, and then yelled to another deputy, "What are we voting for?" He tuned in to the next question, on whether to divide the proposal into parts or consider it as a whole, and when the vote for considering it as a whole was taken he shouted to a friend, "Raise your hand, Volodya! Raise your hand!" Volodya obeyed, and the proposal was kept whole. Yashin's attention soon strayed, however, and when the next vote was taken and hands went up he again raised his and yelled, "What are we voting for?" And so it went.

Pshenov was not a man to give up easily. He protested from the floor that deputies did not understand the questions they were voting on, that they had been given only a one-sided presentation, that they must not rush into a reorganization of dubious legality. The chair offered him five minutes to make his case, and he strode to the lectern, his face taut with tension.

He spoke in sad tones of how two collegial organs of government, the Executive Committee and the District Council, should complement each other. "At present, this entire council has no program for action," he declared. "We have to serve the interests of our voters."

Yashin and others shouted, "Right! The voters!" Sneering, the deputies

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mocked him, laughed at him, hooted, and groaned at practically everything he said.

Pshenov spoke of the need to observe the letter of the law. “Sure,” a deputy beside me remarked to his colleagues. “He sticks to the letter of the law—the law of the apparat.” They laughed.

As Pshenov continued past his five minutes, Yashin pointed ostentatiously to his watch, but Krasnov made no move to interrupt, so Yashin shouted, “Time!” Krasnov ignored him.

“The Executive Committee has already had many of its functions taken away,” Pshenov complained.

“Taken by corruption!” Tatiana Tsilvik yelled. She was dressed as if she were relaxing on a Sunday afternoon at home with a good book. Her hair was pulled back in a loose French twist, and she wore brown corduroy slacks and a heavy white sweater with baggy sleeves pushed up nearly to her elbows. She spoke intensely and rarely smiled, but her remarks were so pointed that they provoked gleeful guffaws from the deputies. “This system of Soviet power is awful,” she said at one point. “Vladimir Ilyich did this to us. What a bandit!” Her irreverent reference to Lenin sent nearby legislators into giggles. She also had a keen eye for conflict of interest: she criticized as “absurd” a commission’s recent endorsement of Pshenov’s request for thirty-eight thousand rubles in additional funds for the staff of his Executive Committee. “We don’t need his advice,” she said from the microphone in the right-hand aisle, her amplified voice booming. “He uses his administrative-command system to interfere. Who oversees the proposal? The commission that Pshenov himself appointed!”

She was followed by Arkady Agolakov, the former Communist, a man with a short gray beard and merry eyes. An electrical engineer, he was now the chairman of the self-governing council in the microdistrict of Nikitsky Vorota. He condemned the Executive Committee for failing to address people’s actual problems, but he cautioned against believing that the proposed reorganization would solve everything. “It’s important that people live well,” he said simply. “What you need to do is to develop self-government. Bureaucrats who sit there are unresponsive to desires from below. You have to turn it upside down.”

From the other side of the hall, a deputy with long brown hair that covered the back of his collar suddenly walked to the lectern, spoke briefly in defense of Pshenov, and accused the deputies of being “illiterate.” The place exploded in an uproar. One of the legislators whispered to me that this man was beholden to the Executive Committee, because it had given him a job and had arranged to get him a *propiska*, a permit to reside in Moscow. (No one is allowed to live in the capital without such permission, but many do so illegally.) As he walked back to his seat, Krasnov scolded him, saying that it wasn’t the first time he had spoken incorrectly to the legislators.

The debate became rather disjointed, jumping from one subject to another. A stocky man gave a rousing speech about food, which set off a commotion throughout the auditorium. “Fight for the residents of the district, that’s all!” he declared. “Where is the food? Where are the goods?”

In the row behind me, an elderly deputy named Ekaterina Bylenkina declared in a loud whisper to the small group of us nearby, “We have no *taloni*,” the entrance tickets to stores. “They promise but don’t give. They should be shot right now.” She gestured contemptuously toward the front of the room. She looked very serious.

Two of Pshenov’s assistants rose to criticize him. To applause and smiles, one said, “He is too bureaucratic, he concentrates power in his hands, and he doesn’t like criticism.”

At that moment, Aleksei Rulyov came up to Yashin (anybody could walk into the council and sit anywhere) to tell him some good news and hand him a phone number. The microdistrict had managed to obtain the hulk of an old propeller plane to be placed in a park for children to play on. Yashin, bounding out of his chair, literally jumped for joy, and pumped Rulyov’s hand; he had been working on this project for some time.

The debate turned to the election of representatives to legislative committees, called commissions, and to the Presidium, an élite body of deputies that oversaw council business and took decisions between sessions, which were usually held for several days every two months. Commission assignments and Presidium seats were considered choice positions from which to gain power. They were also salaried jobs; ordinary deputies were unpaid volunteers. So the subject provoked tumult in the hall, much of it from a beefy deputy in the back; he kept leaping to his feet, pacing angrily up and down the aisle, and yelling so hard that his face turned red. Tsilvik told me that he was Yuri Antoshkin, a chauffeur who worked for the Central

ON THE RUN

“Too late,” said Uncle Alvin, checking his watch.
He was supposed to take the boy to the funeral,
Little suspecting it would be his own. *Too late:*
The killing words. “ ‘But, my friend, we have come
Too late,’ said the hero.” The textbook salesman
In the motel room can hear the words echo
In his ear, and wonders what they mean in *his* case:
Has he left something undone? Neglected someone
He should have loved? More than likely. Yet
Even at twenty-eight, years before the age of regret,
He had already heard the words. It was too late
To assemble the birds as he had pictured them
One spring morning. Too late to marry the girl
And sire numerous offspring in bohemian splendor.
Too late for anything but life on the run, life
As he was living it, in motels and rental cars,
Running away from something, though not sure what,
Running in place, to keep up with the others,
In pursuit of the ring rolling down the street,
Or to escape into the glory of an unknown destiny.
Running into enemy territory, as fast as a child.

—David Lehman

• •

Committee of the Communist Party.

Only Yashin seemed to think well of all this shouting and crosstalk. He smiled. "It's a creative process," he said. "There are arguments, disagreements, and then it's O.K." Yashin was raising his hand again. I asked what he was voting on, but he didn't know. "What are we voting on?" he called to a colleague.

There was a mood of venomous despair here, partly because nobody seemed to have clear answers, especially in the economic realm. Tsilvik believed that her countrymen were "genetically disposed" to an authoritarian system. Yet she felt that private enterprise was merely "an excuse to steal." Democrats ought to be fighting for democracy, she said, "but all they want is to have businesses, banks, et cetera."

When the council adjourned, several of us continued the discussion in a basement cafeteria, over a filling lunch of cabbage salad, black bread, meatballs, mashed potatoes, and big bowls of greasy cabbage soup with floating dollops of sour cream.

"The members of coöperative businesses are thieves, middlemen who steal food, or get it somewhere, and then sell it on the private market," Tsilvik said. She thought there was Communist Party collusion in this.

"But, look, I'm a Communist," Yashin said, with a grin, "and I organize youth fairs, sporting teams."

"But you're an exception, you're an exception," said Arkady Agolakov. "Communism is a utopian idea."

Another deputy at the table endorsed Tsilvik's reservations about a free market, saying, "I'm not for private enterprise. Maybe we can have collective forms that would not be state-owned."

"We're just not ready for private business," Agolakov agreed.

"There is no social basis for a private economy," the other man said.

At the beginning of the afternoon session, which convened at four o'clock, a deputy walked to the stage with a petition signed by seventeen legislators which demanded an open vote on Pshenov, rather than the secret ballot that had been planned. Agolakov turned to me and explained the reason: about twenty deputies were employees of the Executive Committee, depended on it for their salaries, and wanted to demonstrate publicly their support for Pshenov, to avoid retribution. But Krasnov refused even to take the petition from the outstretched hand of the deputy, who was now screaming in fury.

Finally, when calm was restored, an explanation of the voting procedure was given, and Pshenov, continuing to fight, urged legislators to protest by putting the ballots in their pockets instead of in the ballot box. In the end, fifteen did that, but not enough to save Pshenov and defeat the reorganization plan.

As the session continued into the late evening, Yashin turned to me. "I'm not even tired," he said cheerfully. "I'm so happy we got rid of Pshenov. We just want things to work normally. We're so sick of the farces."

THE next day, Yashin had even greater cause for happiness. Two of his friends and colleagues moved into key positions. Vladimir Tikhonov was elected chairman of the Commission on Self-Government and Communal Management, giving Yashin an edge in promoting his self-governing councils. And, more significant, Leonid Knyshev was elected, from a field of eight candidates, including Pshenov, to the council's new deputy chairmanship, which carried with it the chairmanship of the Executive Committee. Knyshev was an amiable forty-year-old construction engineer and Communist who had supported the Democratic Platform, a key group of reformers within the Party. He, too, was close to Yashin.

Pshenov's refusal to give up infuriated his critics. After he entered his name as a candidate for the new job, Tsilvik paced the lobby, raging. "What kind of a circus is this?" she demanded. "Pshenov has his ass kicked and he comes back as a candidate." And after his defeat he appealed to the local prosecutor to declare the reorganization unconstitutional, because it placed the executive under the legislative branch. The prosecutor did indeed inform the council that its decision was illegal, but the council's Presidium rejected the ruling. That left the decision intact, for the Soviet Union has no tradition of courts' resolving executive-legislative disputes.

Pshenov was tenacious: he attended the Presidium meeting that rebuffed the prosecutor. But he seemed rather frightened of me, for some reason. He had made an appointment for an in-

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terview, then cancelled it. When I approached him and asked for another, he agreed to see me at eleven o'clock the following morning. That happened to be the hour at which the Presidium meeting ended. I walked up to him then, and a panicked look came over his face. "Impossible, impossible," he said, and literally ran away down the hall.

On the morning after the council ousted Pshenov, the legislators arrived in a better mood, joking as they shed their coats and fur hats, and congratulating one another on the small coup d'état they had engineered. But Kirill Lisenkov, a deputy with a closely cropped beard and bald head, who looked somewhat like Lenin, was rather morose. He talked with me as we stood in the lobby, just outside the door, so he could dash in for any vote that was called. After being elected, he said, "All of us came with the idea that we had naked power: I can get the streets cleaned, I can fix holes in the roof, I can do something about this awful housing situation. We had this sense of power. For the first time in our history, we had elected our representatives. So I have my electorate behind me. Give me six months. But our crisis is deeper. After several months, we began to feel our impotence. I don't know how these bureaucratic procedures work. I don't know how to use the democratic procedures. On the local level, we're not in charge."

Lisenkov's observation reflected my own feeling that the legislators, for all their sound and fury, were merely nipping at the heels of an entrenched bureaucracy. Later, when I described the council's meeting to Francis X. Clines, of the New York *Times*, he remarked that these sessions reminded him of the mock legislatures that are held by high schools, or the one day a year when students take over the town government. The youngsters go through the motions quite seriously, passing resolutions and the like, Clines said, but they are not plugged into any power, of course.

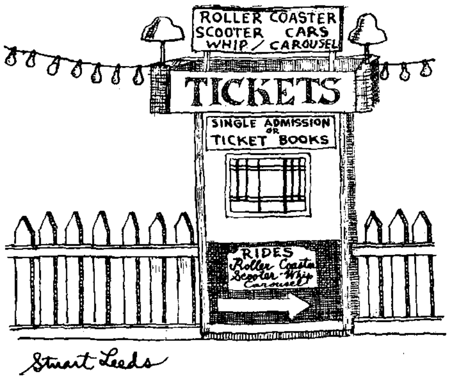
Valery Avdeyev opened the door of Apartment 19, on the fifth, and top, floor of 32 Bolshaya Gruzinskaya Street, and ushered Yashin and me inside. He had lived in this apartment since he was born, in 1961, sometimes with three other families, sometimes with five people in a single room. The crowding had been eased in recent years by new housing on the outskirts of Moscow, and Avdeyev's family of four had now spread into five of the apartment's six rooms. The sixth room was empty. The floor was covered with crumbled plaster, and ominous cracks ran along the walls. A hole in the ceiling was patched with a large slab of plywood; holding it up, bracing it to keep the roof from falling in, were two tree trunks, each about four inches in diameter, which stood wedged like crude pillars between floor and ceiling.

This was the only time I saw Yashin angry. At my request, he had brought me to visit some communal apartments, and he fumed constantly. "I lived in a communal apartment for twenty-eight years," he said. "It is a problem very close to me. Such poverty. Look at what conditions people live in. Look." And he led me into the room next door. The ceiling was stained where rain and melting snow leaked in. The wall was cracked over a window. In the bathroom, the pipes were badly rusted; one resident said the water pressure was kept very low, almost to an inadequate level, because of a fear that the old pipes would burst.

When Avdeyev saw me scribbling notes, he smiled sardonically. "You'll write and write, and everything will be the same."

"How can he live in these conditions?" Yashin asked. "We need to build. We need to build, and urgently."

The chief activist of the building was Ludmilla Iskra, a seamstress who made coats and hats of sable, mink, fox, and Persian lamb at a nearby coöperative. A member of Yashin's self-governing council, she was in the forefront of the push for new housing. She had lived in Apartment 16, on the third floor, for forty-five years; as families moved out, she and her teen-age son and daughter had gradually expanded into three rooms, which she had fixed up with comfortable furniture and attractive curtains. But sharing the apartment with even one remaining family demanded constant compromise. "If we lived in two houses," she said of her neighbors, "I'd get along fine. Since we live together, there are always conflicts." And she flicked her forefinger under her jaw, the traditional Russian gesture for excessive drinking.



She showed me her washing machine, in the bathroom, and her neighbor's, in the hall. In the kitchen, she said, "This is my neighbor's cabinet and counter, and this is my cabinet and counter." They avoided the usual kitchen conflicts at dinnertime, because, she explained, "My neighbor is a pensioner and cooks in the afternoon. I come home late from work and cook about eight o'clock. Years ago, when all of them were here and I had small kids, I was washing all the time, and there were times when my neighbor and I wanted to be in the kitchen at the same time."

As we walked back to her main room, Yashin grabbed a light switch that was hanging precariously from its wire in the hallway. "Look at this," he said. "This house needs a new roof. It leaks. The cellar is flooded. The walls are rotten."

In Apartment 14, a gray wisp of a man, Boris Dyachkov, showed us around. He, too, had lived his whole life in the same place—a life that began in 1923. His wife, Ina, was a sculptor, and he was a painter of scenes as sombre as the dark rooms. "We don't complain," he said.

"*He* doesn't complain," Yashin shot back. "*I* complain, as a deputy. We have to build, we have to do it. Pshenov goes to Germany and concludes an agreement with the Trade Center. What's more important, the Trade Center or this?"

There used to be three families in this apartment, but now only a woman and her son were left here with the Dyachkovs. An elderly woman had moved out. "We're very glad this old woman left," Boris said, "because she made her room into a hotel, and she was taking in people from the street." He puffed on a foul-smelling cigarette.

Yashin kept talking about his plans. "My idea is to move people from two old buildings into one, rent one for offices, and use the money for a new building," he told the couple. "I know everyone who lives here, and they will be the first to get apartments."

I took Ina aside and asked her quietly whether she thought Yashin would actually do anything.

"From what I can see, he may—he's energetic and young," she said. Then she had a second thought. "Before, we had some hope, before the elections," she said. "We had some belief some years ago. But now we don't believe in anything."

In the kitchen, where each family had a separate, freestanding cabinet for its pots, pans, dishes, and silverware, I noticed a burner ablaze on the old gas stove.

I asked if that was because there wasn't enough heat.

No, they answered. They kept it lit all the time because they could not find any matches to buy.

THE old woman was trembling with distress. Her money was being stolen by a neighbor in her communal apartment; she was frightened, and she wanted out. She wore a knitted green hat and, plugged into her right ear, a white hearing aid, its cord dangling along her neck and disappearing inside the collar of her black overcoat. She fumbled with her purse, pulled out a crumpled statement of her problems, and handed it across the desk to an unsmiling, dark-suited man named Anatoly Kurochkin.

This was another deputy's reception, but one with quite a different atmosphere from Yashin's. Kurochkin, thirty-eight years old, had been the third secretary of the district committee of the Communist Party for one year, from 1989 to 1990. He was now a deputy chairman of the District Council and had been delegated to fill in for Krasnov at this Wednesday reception, in Room 101 of 2 Shmitovsky Way. It was a little after four o'clock in the afternoon.

In the past ten minutes, Kurochkin and his secretary, Irina Yegorova, had dealt efficiently with two complaints. A middle-aged man had complained of going months without hot water in his communal apartment. "You are right to ask for that," Kurochkin had said, jotting a note on the man's written statement and passing it down the table to Yegorova. She took his phone number, gave him names of officials and a phone number to call, and dismissed him. An elderly woman and her grown son had then come in to charge that an apartment they had been waiting for had been given to someone else, who had connections. "Were you at the housing commission on Monday?" Kurochkin asked. "You have to direct this to the commission on Mondays, and everything will be examined there."

"Can't you do everything yourself?" the woman pleaded. "Otherwise, my son has to take off from work."

"We don't accept people on housing problems," Yegorova snapped. She wore a blue-and-white sweater, and had prettily curled blond hair. She was too young to be speaking to older people so brusquely.

"This is just garbage," the son replied. "I'm sick, so I'm applying to get this flat because of my health. I was given some injection in the Army, and now I feel bad. Sometimes I fall down."

Kurochkin's face had remained impassive, but he picked up the phone and dialled a number; there was no answer. Yegorova suggested another department, from which they could get a required letter. They had already been there, the man had said, and had never received the letter. Kurochkin then instructed Yegorova to intervene with the office, but warned them that they might be shunted off to other agencies. As they left, they complained about a leaky roof.

Now the old woman with the hearing aid was answering Kurochkin's questions, which he sometimes had to ask more than once. Yes, she had been to the police about the thefts. Yes, she had applied for better housing. "I have been waiting for an apartment since 1961," she said. "They took my name off the list. I was living in a completely bad building, and I was offered this flat, where I live now."

"You have to get in line again for an apartment," Yegorova suggested.

"When they were tearing down that building, I was already in line. They took me off the list and gave me this room in 1963. I've been living in Moscow since 1939, and everyone living in this condemned building was given separate apartments, and I was given a room." Her voice was shaking.

Kurochkin pronounced the session ended. "Your application is being sent to place you in line to wait for an apartment. That's all." His tone, offi-

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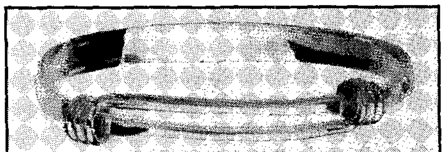

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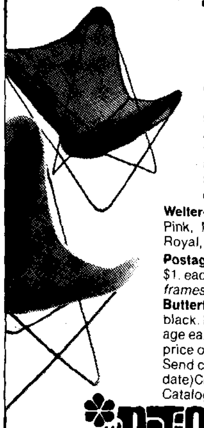

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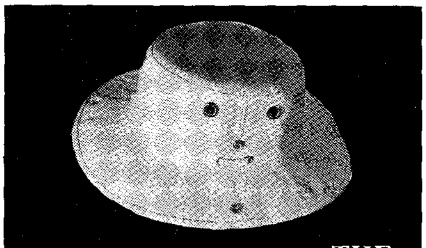

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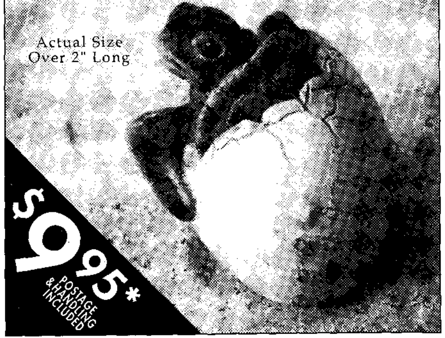

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cious and final, was meant to signal her to leave. She did not.

"How can I live with such a neighbor?" she asked.

"There is no housing," Kurochkin declared. "So there is nothing that can be done instantly."

A look of panic crossed her face. Not a thing was going to happen. She had come to this pinnacle of local powerlessness only to find that what was left of her life would remain unchanged.

Yegorova made a stab at blaming the old woman for her own fate. "But you agreed at the time to take this room," she said. "That's why you were taken off the list."

"I didn't agree," the woman insisted. "I still have a piece of paper from your Executive Committee that I've been waiting for an apartment since 1961."

"Give us your phone," Yegorova said. "They will call you."

"It's impossible to live. The ceiling is falling down. It's awful everywhere. Why isn't it possible to help this deaf person?"

"Your statement has been received," Kurochkin said, again trying to close the conversation. "Thank you."

The old woman began to cry. "She hurt my head, that neighbor." Her face crumpled into a child's face of helplessness, vulnerability. "How long will I be able to live? I can't stand it any longer." She dabbed at her eyes with a handkerchief, but Kurochkin looked at her coldly and tried again to get rid of her.

"Everything is clear," he said. "That is all. Thank you."

The secretary asked again for her phone number, but the woman couldn't remember it; she kept getting the digits mixed up, so Yegorova gave her one of the office numbers and arranged for the woman to call with her own number when she got home.

"The neighbor is taking money from my coat," she said. "She took a hundred rubles from my overcoat. I'm deaf. I can't hear what she's doing."

"Everything is clear. Thank you." A note of irritation had entered Kurochkin's voice.

"What can I expect?" asked the woman.

"A letter," Kurochkin said.

She was weeping openly now, the tears streaming down her cheeks, her voice breaking. "I won't survive until the letter. I'm so upset that I can't sleep at night."

"Enough," Kurochkin snapped. "Everything is clear."

"How long will I have to wait?"

"Not more than a month."

The old woman hobbled sadly out with a cane.

When she had gone, Kurochkin summed up the case crisply. "Do you understand? She's old, she lives in a communal apartment, she has bad relations with her neighbors. She'll have five to six years to wait." I asked why he couldn't put her at the top of the list. He sighed. "More than half the people who come in are in such special situations," he said.

The next case was more manageable, but Kurochkin chose not to deal with it. Two women complained that they and many of their neighbors had not been given *taloni*, the tickets to district stores.

"Your deputy can give you an answer," he said. "You have to apply to him."

The women continued to try to explain. Their deputy had the tickets, they insisted, he just hadn't distributed all of them.

"Listen again," Kurochkin said. "I will repeat this for a second time. If you want to have a discussion, it must be done another time. Only a deputy can answer to his voters. You must apply to your deputy."

Again, they tried to explain that their deputy was the problem. They suspected him of saving the tickets for his friends and relatives.

"I am losing patience," Kurochkin declared. "Do I have to repeat it a third time?"

Now the women started getting angry. "The District Council works badly," the older one said.

"The District Executive Committee works in an outrageous way," the younger said. "There is not a single store you can get into without a ticket."

"Apply to your deputy."

The women raised their voices, and the conversation exploded into a flurry of crosstalk.

"The deputy, he's getting them and just keeping them."

"The tickets are being carefully distributed," Yegorova insisted.

"They get eight hundred *taloni* for one store," Kurochkin said. "They are being distributed carefully."

"A one-person family gets one ticket," the younger woman complained. "Another family may have four people—two adults, two children—and they still get one ticket."

"Young men return from the Army," the older woman said. "Our sons, and we have nothing to feed them."

Kurochkin was getting downright annoyed. "Not all the people who live in the district are satisfied," he said. "Even those who are satisfied don't thank the deputies for their work. We spend our own earnings. We work long hours."

"It's the Executive Committee," the younger said.

This gave Kurochkin an opening. "The new chairman of the Executive Committee is Knyshev," he told the women, and he gave them Knyshev's phone number. This was a dirty trick, for Knyshev had been elected less than twenty-four hours earlier, and had hardly had a chance to find his office, much less learn his job.

The older woman snorted contemptuously. "Everything is clear," she said. She could see when the buck was being passed.

"Excuse me, please," Kurochkin said sarcastically. He was becoming increasingly irritated. "Make a list of people who didn't get the tickets and get it to your deputy."

"We're not satisfied with the soviet system," the younger woman replied. "It's impossible to buy anything. You don't know where to go."

"It's impossible to create Communism in one separate district," Kurochkin said. For an instant, this stopped the conversation. Somebody was still trying to create Communism?

"In other districts, everything is distributed thoroughly," the younger woman insisted. "People say they have already visited stores four times, while we haven't visited one."

"Just tell us the people who didn't get the tickets," Kurochkin said. "Rumors don't interest me. Write a statement."

"No, I won't write a complaint!" the younger shouted. "Everything is clear!" The two of them stormed out angrily, and they could be heard shouting in the corridor as they announced to others the unsatisfactory results of their meeting. Kurochkin stared coldly at the doorway.

So it went, into the evening. Whatever Kurochkin was really feeling, he acted like a personification of a government bureaucracy impervious to tragedy. He showed no emotion, and he certainly had none of Yashin's ability to display sympathy or convey concern. However, he may actually have done just as well, or better, at solving problems. Yegorova had a system for keeping track of the cases. She entered each one in a ledger and filed the written statements among its light-green pages. "I register them and send them to the place that works on them," she explained. "We follow up on them and receive an answer in a month. Sometimes I go to the office, sometimes another person does it."

Aside from the intractable housing problems, I asked, what proportion of the cases could she solve?

"About thirty per cent of the nonhousing problems are resolved positively," she said.

Once, a little later, when there were no citizens in the office complaining, Kurochkin turned to me. "It's awfully sad," he said. "It's our reality."

I asked how he felt after a session like this.

"I feel bad."

Could he help?

"According to our laws, according to our conditions, I can help some people. Often I have to refuse, because our responsibility is to the whole. They do not satisfy the requirements. Sometimes their needs do not coincide with the law or the norms."

And what had he learned in this job that he had not known before?

He answered without hesitation, "The scale of the poverty."

—David K. Shipler

•

Crime Stoppers is seeking the public's help in solving the robbery of a downtown bank last month.

Security Pacific Bank at 550 W. Seventh Ave. was robbed just after 2:15 p.m. Feb. 7. The robber, a male, entered the branch wearing a chimpanzee mask and displayed a pistol.

He approached one of the tellers and demanded money from the cash drawer. The teller complied, and the robber fled.

The man was described as white, about 5 feet 6 inches, and 150 pounds. He also wore a fleece-lined blue denim jacket and blue jeans.

The chimpanzee mask had a light-colored face surrounded by dark hair. The mouth was open and no teeth were showing. The ears were large and also light-colored.

—*Anchorage Times.*

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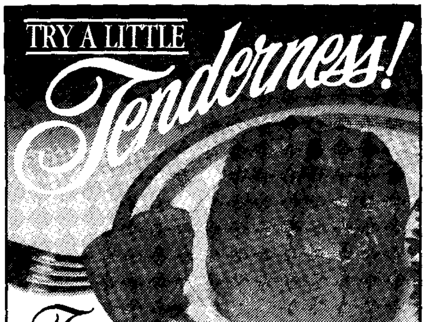

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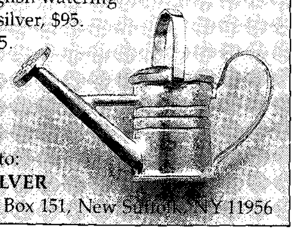

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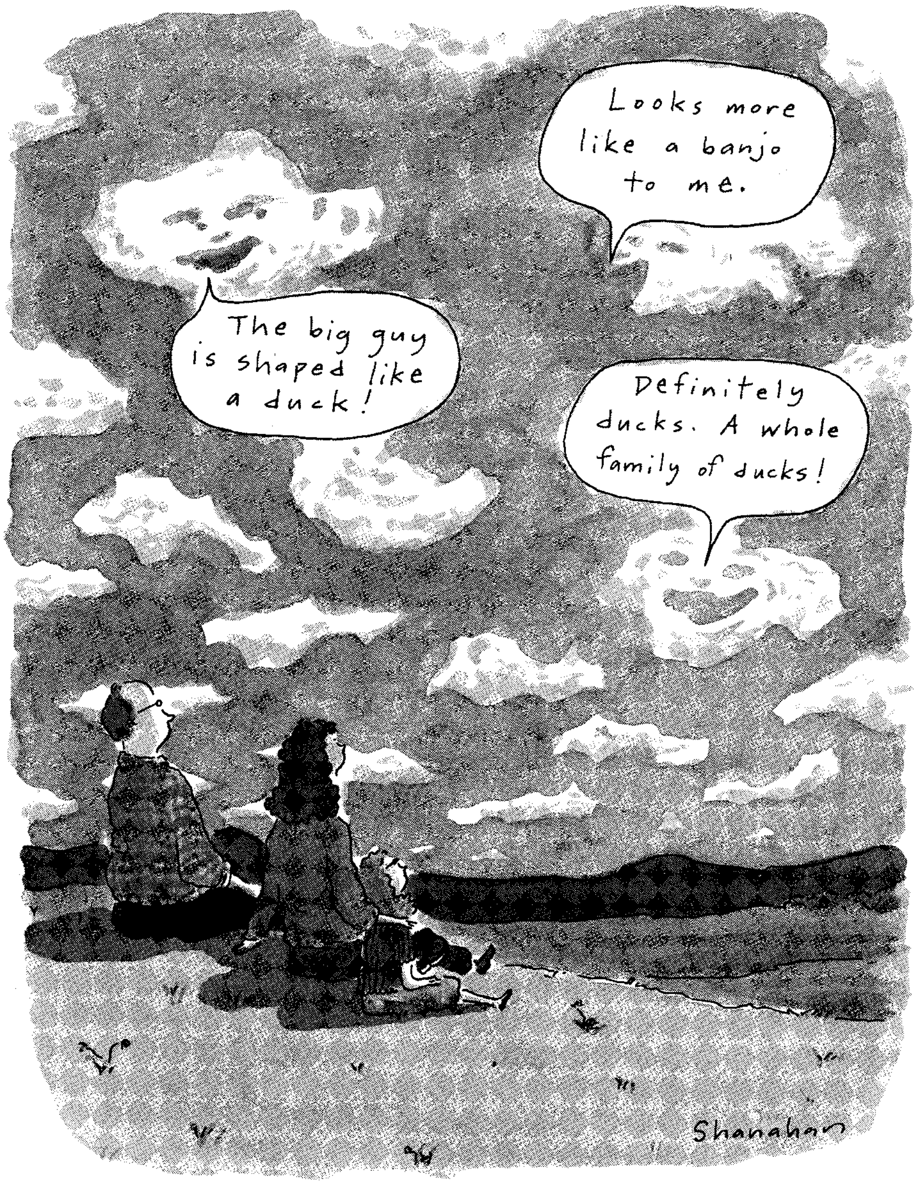
THE THEATRE

Cosa Nostra

THE Promenade is host to a merry and modest piece of nonsense called "Breaking Legs," by Tom Dulack: a one-joke comedy about the proprietor of an Italian restaurant (Vincent Gardenia) who enlists the help of two colleagues in the mob—a capo (Philip Bosco) and his lieutenant (Victor Argo)—to finance a new play by the young professor his daughter wants to marry. The professor, whose name is Terry, and who is played by Nicolas Surovy, is the only character aboard without a drop of Italian blood in his veins, and when he confesses that his play is about crime he is somewhat surprised by the reaction to the news. Reaction is the key word here. Most of the laughs come between the lines, which don't amount to much. We all know that Philip Bosco is a splendid actor, but as a reactor he is more than that: his takes belong to the ages. Note especially the spooky laugh through stiff, sliced cheeks—the result of a professional mishap—and the eyes popping with eloquence. His characterization is in no sense slumming but, rather, a release from all those worthy roles through all those years at the Roundabout.

In the course of the action, a terrified fellow (Larry Storch) is wiped out for nonpayment of debt and is casually forgotten. Everyone else sticks to the point. "If this play of yours is such a hot item," the capo asks at the beginning, "how come you gotta raise the money from amateurs like us?" The initiation period is short, however, and he soon becomes as show-business as David Merrick. "The second act needs work," he announces, and there is much more talk of the kind that Harold Ross called intramural: about Off and Off Off Broadway—that sort of thing. If "Breaking Legs" is short on plot and episodes, the performances, as broad as they come, make up for some of the weaknesses. The play is probably not for all tastes, but I laughed quite a lot. Mr. Gardenia, as funny as ever, puts his own spin on every word he speaks; Mr. Argo is properly gruff and submissive as Mr. Bosco's assistant; Mr. Surovy is properly assertive and innocent as the professor. (What *can* she see in him?) Sue Giosa (new to me), as the proprietor's daughter, is excellent—pretty and sexy, and mistress of herself through some tricky and questionable business. Under John Tillinger's direction, everything plays, nothing goes to waste. There is no question, though, that the quality rises the minute Mr. Bosco walks on the stage, and tends to slump when he leaves it. James Noone designed the correctly and horribly tacky restaurant, Ken Billington designed the lighting, and David C. Woolard designed the costumes, notably including Mr. Bosco's gaudy and startling getup.

—EDITH OLIVER


Looks more like a banjo to me.
The big guy is shaped like a duck!
Definitely ducks. A whole family of ducks!
Shanahan

Toxic Shock

ANYONE who thinks he might get a kick out of seeing John Malkovich drink a cup of coffee while balancing another cup of coffee on his head should probably hurry over to the American Place Theatre, where Mr. Malkovich is appearing in "States of Shock," a new Sam Shepard play; otherwise, the American Place Theatre is probably a pretty good place to avoid. "States of Shock," which has something to do with Vietnam and something to do with clam chowder, is here for a limited run, and that's just as well. It's strictly for those who remain convinced that Shepard is a genius and for those who continue to delight in seeing Mr. Malkovich do what he does best—namely, be unpleasant in an outlandish way.

Here, playing a character called simply Colonel, Mr. Malkovich makes an entrance pushing Michael Wincott, playing a war veteran called simply Stubbs, in a wheelchair. The setting is a coffee shop, where Mr. Malkovich and Mr. Wincott have come to observe the anniversary of the death of Mr. Malkovich's son, killed, we're told, by the same "friendly fire" that left Mr. Wincott maimed and apparently brain damaged. (He keeps saying the same things over and over.) Also at the coffee shop are a middle-aged couple (Isa Thomas and Steve Nelson), who are having trouble getting service, and a waitress (Erica Gimpel), who introduces herself as Glory Bee and is phobic about carrying things. Mr. Malkovich offers her some sound advice about waitressing and orders a couple of sundaes. Much forced comedy is generated over the issue of whose order will arrive first, and much ambiguity over the question of whether Mr. Malkovich's dead son and Mr. Wincott are one and the same. The middle-aged couple take umbrage because the sundaes arrive before their clam chowder, and Mr. Malkovich takes umbrage at something else and begins to beat Mr. Wincott, whereupon the middle-aged man, in whose lap the waitress has dumped one of the bowls of clam chowder, stops cleaning himself and begins to masturbate. There are also some gas masks, a number of portentous lighting cues, and a couple of percussionists making a huge though intermittent racket behind a scrim. And, of course, the eating of the sundaes becomes a very sloppy business indeed, but whether the ice-cream episode comes before or after the masturbation episode, and how it all ends, I can't say. I must have switched off at some point.

"States of Shock," which lasts about eighty minutes and is performed without intermission, has a set by Bill Stabile, costumes by Gabriel Berry, and lighting designed by Pat Dignan and Anne Militello. It was directed by Bill Hart, whose previous credits include such other audience-hostile works as "Cuba and His Teddy Bear." It's an index of the bankruptcy of both his and Shepard's theatrical vocabulary that nothing either of them does can help seeming predictable. The point has been reached where the presence of a character in a wheelchair in a Shepard play predicates a moment when someone will tip that character out of the wheelchair, when the unveiling of a character's horribly disfiguring scar predicates that a more prolonged look at that scar will be forced on us later, and when the very mention of an ice-

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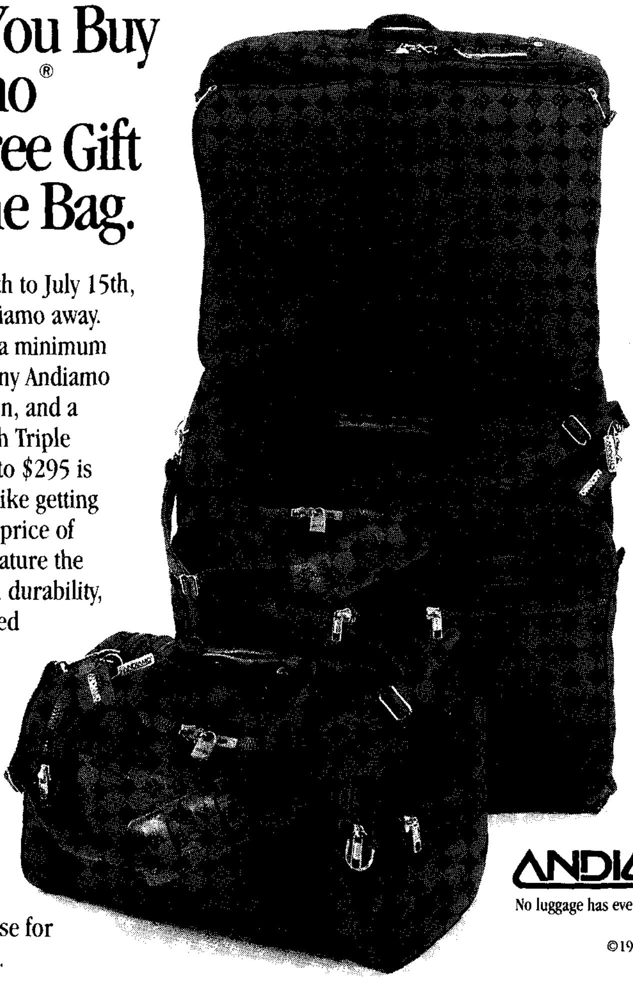

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cream sundae or a bowl of soup predicates the creation of a mess.

A SIMILAR wistful hankering after anarchy and avant-gardism informs the version of "The Way of the World" that opened at the Public Theatre last week, directed by David Greenspan. Mr. Greenspan, whose previous directing experience has been confined largely to his own works (like the much reviled "Dead Mother or Shirley Not All in Vain," which was seen earlier this year at the Public), is one of the four new underqualified associate directors of the New York Shakespeare Festival. The current revival is billed as a "modern dress" production; accordingly, what is important about it is not what characters the actors play but what they wear.

That André Braugher is playing Mirabell (and who Mirabell is and what he shares with other Restoration heroes) matters less than that as Mirabell he sports delicately polka-dotted suspenders. Mr. Greenspan has no interest in the uses of artifice in Congreve, and no ideas about how to find a contemporary equivalent of the Restoration fop (he has Joe Urla play Witwoud as a stereotypical effeminate, and Burke Moses play Petulant as a psychotic biker of ambivalent sexuality). He wants us to notice that René Rivera, as the villain Fainall, wears a long braid, like Pocahontas's, down his back; that Mr. Rivera and Mr. Braugher and Mr. Urla all wear color-coördinated silk designer ties; and that Mr. Moses has greased hair and wears leather trousers.

The idea of mounting a "modern dress" production of Congreve in a city where Congreve has not been professionally performed in years is absurd enough, but what can have been the thinking behind putting on Restoration comedy with all that downtown leather and lace (the shades, the cigarettes, the stretch pants, the miniskirts) while retaining the very stage devices (the bowing and flourishing, the snuff-taking and fan play) that make one wonder whether the genre can be produced at all on the contemporary American stage? A production set in period but performed without the hackwork one associates with wigs and waistcoats would be a triumph, but, of course, a company of schooled and skilled actors and actresses could perform Congreve with or without period costumes—in fishnets or in gorilla suits, stark naked or (as in some Shakespearean productions of the sixties and seventies) in rehearsal clothes—and it wouldn't matter a damn so long as the play came through.

The poor actors in Mr. Greenspan's production, unequal to the material to begin with, have been given no guidance or direction. Mr. Braugher, who is one of the few members of the cast with the vocal ability to play classical drama (and who clearly has the wit to play Mirabell), is thrown back on dumb show: he makes little mime gestures to underscore specific words (in case we don't know what they mean), and keeps striking nineteenth-century poses—putting a hand to the side of the mouth for a secret, raising a finger in the air for a pronouncement, shaping a tummy when referring to a fat lady. Mr. Rivera works very hard to make each utterance seem freshly thought up, but delivers the lines with a steady inattention to what they mean, and sometimes mistakes what Fainall is saying for its opposite. The only actors who find a modern idiom for their roles are James Lally and Angie Phillips, who do a nice job as the clever servants Waitwell and Foible. For the rest, the acting ranges from the unthought-out to the incompetent: Joseph Costa is hamstrung by having to play Sir Wilfull Witwoud as a Texas hayseed; Jayne Atkinson, as Millamant, reduces Congreve's heroine to a simpering flirt; Caris Corfman is often unintelligible as Mrs. Marwood; and Mr. Urla is too busy to be actually funny. In the incompetent category fall Ruth Maleczech's Lady Wishfort, Mary Shultz's Mrs. Fainall, and Terra Vandergaw, who makes such a hash of the small role of a servant that we're left wondering why a character called Mincing keeps calling the lady of the house Mim.

One can speculate on the sadism behind the unflattering costumes that Mr. Greenspan had Elsa Ward design for the women in the company, or on the hostility toward the play which is suggested by his casting camp actresses like Miss Maleczech and Miss Shultz in classical roles. But the real question is why the New York Shakespeare Festival has been allowed to persist in this vein, becoming a living monument to ignorance and waste.

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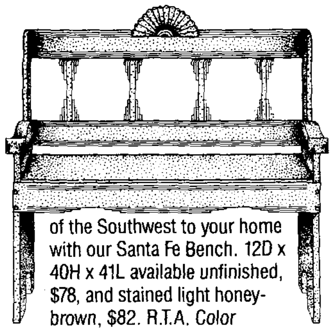

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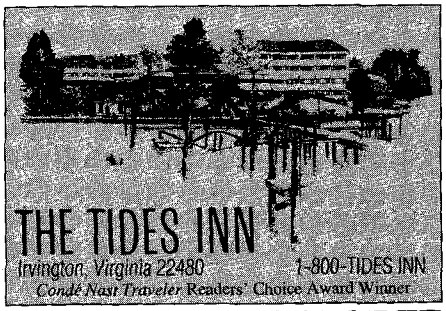

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MUSICAL EVENTS

Small, Old, New, Good

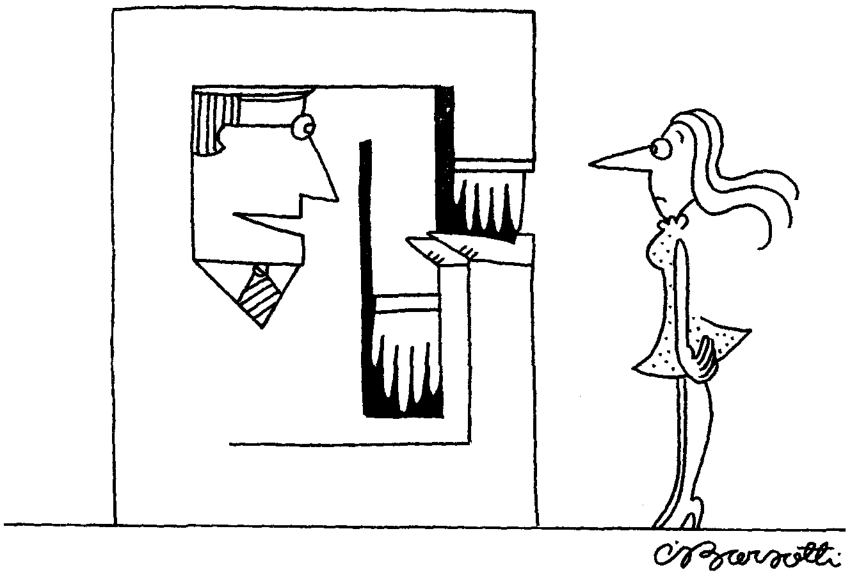
ART forms are created, flourish, die. Nineteenth-century grand opera in its full splendor, vocal, orchestral, and scenic, is proving too expensive to be maintained to high traditional standards by more than a few well-endowed companies. But there are masterpieces and many good operas of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and twentieth centuries materially—though not artistically—less exigent. It might not matter if some of our grand-opera companies that essay mainly the big, popular works were to be replaced by trimmer, less costly troupes, in smaller theatres. The repertory available to them is huge, and is ever growing: old operas come newly to light, and new operas are composed. Monteverdi's dramas, unheard during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and Handel's, unheard during the nineteenth, are now often performed. Mozart's "Idomeneo" and "Clemenza di Tito" have joined the canon, and "La Finta Giardiniera" seems about to follow; Covent Garden has announced "Mitridate." Some modern operas—post-Stravinsky, post-Britten—whose productions I recall with pleasure are Peter Maxwell Davies's "The Lighthouse" (three singers, twelve players), in Boston and in Guelph; John Casken's "Golem" (eight singers, ten players), staged by Opera Omaha; Wolfgang Rihm's "Lenz" (three principals, semichorus of six, eleven players), in Bloomington and at the Juilliard; and Siegfried Matthus's "Cornet Rilke" (six soloists, chorus, eleven players), at the Manhattan School. Moreover, some nineteenth-century works have been effectively refashioned for small-company use. The Old Vic used to play "Tristan" with an orchestra of twenty-eight. Last year, a "Ring" company toured Britain with a cast of twelve and an orchestra of eighteen—not "the real thing" but, by all accounts, *a* real thing.

THE first production, nine years ago, by the Mannes Camerata, a small, adventurous college company, was of Marco da Gagliano's "Dafne." The opera was played in Christ Church, on Park Avenue—a picturesque building further decked for the occasion with a painted Castalian spring pouring out over the altar and a Kabuki-style Python for Apollo to kill. Last month, the Camerata offered a new production of "Dafne," in the Mannes College music room. "Dafne," which appeared in 1608, was the fourth opera to be composed. Three Orpheus works preceded it: Jacopo Peri's "Euridice," in 1600 (the Camerata performed it in 1983, again in Christ Church); Giulio Caccini's "Euridice," in 1602; and Monteverdi's "Orfeo," in 1607. "Dafne" was the successor to a spectacular Medici *intermedio* (1589), with Marenzio music, that represented Apollo's fight with the Python (Buontalenti designs, an Agostino Caracci engraving, and descriptions of the monster's mirror-spangled wings, gnashing jaws, glowing tongue, fiery breath, and inky blood gushing from the wounds Apollo inflicted survive) and to Peri's "Dafne" (1598), in which the same librettist, Ottavio Rinuccini—"merely to make a simple test of what the song of our age could do"—rewrote his *intermedio* for dramatic singing, adding the sequel of Daphne's metamorphosis. The experiment was successful. From it, opera was born. Rinuccini was also the librettist of the "Euridice" set by Peri and by Caccini. For Gagliano's "Dafne," which was commissioned for a Mantuan royal wedding, he amplified his earlier librettos, combining high spectacle, choruses, and solo song. As a drama, this Gagliano "Dafne" is not a patch on Monteverdi's "Orfeo," or even on either "Euridice." But it has its attractions.

The score was published in 1608. The composer's long preface is among the most fascinating of all operatic documents. It gives an account of how opera came into being. It reviews the singers of the first performance. It includes precepts that modern singers must take to heart:

> Where the sense does not demand it, leave aside every ornament, so as not to act like that painter who knew how to paint cypress trees and therefore painted them everywhere. Instead, try to pronounce every syllable distinctly so that the words are understood, and let this be the principal aim of every singer whenever he sings, especially when performing on the stage, and let him be persuaded that real pleasure is increased by understanding the words.

And it is a detailed, practical "production book." Ovid sings the Prologue: his entry, step by step, cued to the measures of the score, is prescribed in as careful a way as Wagner prescribed the Dutchman's during "Die Frist ist um." The chorus's disposition, movements, gestures are specified, number by number. Apollo, Gagliano says, should have an identical, dancing double, to fight the Python with "agility, leaps, and wielding of the bow with appropriate poses"; if the singing Apollo were to undertake the combat, he might lack breath for his subsequent solo. (In Mantua, "the exchange worked so well that no one even perceived the deceit during the many



"Actually, Claudine, I like you very much—probably more than any other woman I've known."

times that it was played"; in modern productions of Strauss's "Salome," a comparable exchange is sometimes all too evident.) Practical instruction, with measurements, is provided for the trick of converting laurel branches into instant wreath, while singing. (Ännchen, in Weber's "Freischütz," needs the technique when from a bunch of roses she must twine Agathe's bridal coronal.) The orchestral placement is described: "Make sure that the instruments that are to accompany the solo voices are located so that they can see the faces of the performers, in order that by hearing each other better they may perform together."

Gagliano's preface—and also the libretto, with a parallel English translation, in large type that was legible during the performance—appeared in the Mannes program book. Paul Echols, the Camerata director, heeded its spirit but not its details. There was little spectacle. The Python was a dancer in all-over black—no spangled wings, no fiery breath—and the fighting Apollo was a dancer in all-over white. The singers wore modern evening dress and had life-size black-and-white period cutouts of their characters which they could trundle around and hide behind. It was an "idea," but not a good one. Song from behind unchanging plywood silhouettes proved unmoving; things came to life when the principals, for their main solos, stepped clear and let us see their faces. This "Dafne" was less of a show, less of a drama, than the earlier production, but musically it was far more assured and stylish. The Camerata has become confident, and there was shapely singing from all. Olga Makarina (Venus) and Peter Stewart (Apollo) were outstanding. A septet of bowed and plucked strings, directed at the keyboard by Bradley Brookshire, provided supple accompaniment. As an *intermedio* there was Monteverdi's ballet "Tirsi e Clori," which closes his seventh book of madrigals. The performance, choreographed by Dorothy Olsson, ignored the composer's staging instructions but did offer a pleasant period divertissement.

ONLY three of Monteverdi's operas survive—"Orfeo," "Ulisse," and "Poppea"—unless the excited (word-of-mouth, not so far published) account that the famous "Arianna" has been recovered proves true. The first of the great opera composers remains one of the greatest. He commanded musical gesture that is kinetic. He invested words with supraverbal eloquence, made intervals, rhythms, harmonies speak. He matched musical forms to dramatic events. In his madrigals, he became increasingly mimetic. Nearly twenty years passed between the publication of the seventh book of them and the eighth, the "Madrigali Guerrieri, et Amorosi," which appeared in 1638. It is dedicated to the Emperor Ferdinand III, who had inherited, along with the Imperial Throne, the closing campaigns of the Thirty Years' War. Ferdinand's brother, the Archduke Leopold, described him as "supporting his sceptre on the lyre and the sword"; the ballet "Movete al mio bel suon," which closes the first part of Book VIII, refers to both the *nobil cetra* and the monarch's *braccio armato.* In a preface to the military and amorous collection the composer cites Plato's "Take that harmony that would fittingly imitate the utterances and the accents of a brave man who is engaged in warfare" (and Plato's recommendation of Pyrrhic measures for warlike music), and stakes a claim for having been the first to do so, fourteen years earlier, in his "Combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda." The components of the "Madrigali Guerrieri, et Amorosi" were composed over a long period but are assembled in an evidently balanced pattern. The martial and the amorous "acts" begin with parallel sonnets ("Let others sing of Love," "Let others sing of Mars"), continue with Petrarch settings, move through duets and trios to an ensemble, and end with pieces intended for dramatic representation, provided with staging directions: the "Combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda" followed by the ballet "Movete al mio bel suon," and the "Lamento della Ninfa" followed (after three intervening canzonets) by the "Ballo delle Ingrate."

Last month, the Measured Breaths Theatre Company gave a dramatic enactment of Book VIII, boldly billed as an "operatic work in two acts by Claudio Monteverdi." It proved strangely coherent and exciting. Most of the texts (which are by various poets, among them Petrarch, Tasso, Rinuccini, and Giambattista Marino) use metaphors of warfare to tell of erotic conflict. Robert Press, the director of the show—and the author of an excellently direct, excellently singable English translation—set Book VIII on a modern battlefield. Stationed behind a barricade, Uzi-armed defenders began the trio "Gira il nemico insidioso amore": "Love, the infiltrating enemy, is encircling the fortress of my heart. Quick! To arms! Let us make a sortie to forestall his advance." They enacted the text, and the agitated music, in a realistic military manner. To verbal metaphor was added visual; the music became newly vivid. In "Tancredi e Clorinda," there was a kind of reversal: martial combat was rendered in erotic visual metaphor—conquest represented by rape—and this was equally stirring. The show dug into the psyche of anyone disturbed by Desert Shield and Desert Storm, pondering why in crisis men act as they do, and marvelling at Monteverdi and his poets' investigation, long ago, of confusions between Eros and Ares. Book VIII is not an "opera," of course, but the enactment of it yielded powerful music drama.

A musical historian could also reflect on continuities of vocal characterization through the monodies of the madrigals. The soprano Nymph—she was sung by Jill Anne Edwards—had good cause to break, at last, into her famous Lamento. The bass—the part was well sung by David Shapero—was at once Ferdinand III, Pluto in the "Ballo delle Ingrate," and General Schwarzkopf. Another soprano—Barbie Shallenberger—sang Venus with brilliantly commanding inflections and decorations (until she flew too high and turned shrill), and gleamingly exemplified the attraction that dazzles men and, by the old reckoning, clouds their judgment. The countertenor Colin Duffy, as her son, was pallid at first but shone in the high reaches of the "Ballo delle Ingrate." Best of all were the two soldiers who sang in most of the numbers, the tenor Douglas Purcell and the baritone Louis Meagley (he was also Tancredi); their clarity, directness and accuracy of utterance, and strength of presence were moving. All the singers—there were eleven—had merit. They lacked the period polish of the Camerata artists but could engage their listeners more directly, addressing them in a language understood. The show was given eight times, in the Gene Frankel Theatre, on Bond Street—a place probably little known to those for whom "opera" means Lincoln Center manifestations. The audience was banked up, intimately, at either end. Through an acting area sparely and subtly decorated by Steve Brownless and strikingly lit by John Patrick Mehler, the part-writing of the madrigals moved through space and took on three-dimensional variety and richness. Roberto Pace, presiding at a synthesizer-harpsichord over a string quartet and a theorbo, led a secure performance.

MOZART left three operas unfinished—"Zaide," "L'Oca del Cairo," and "Lo Sposo Deluso"—and he composed a good deal of music for use in other men's operas. Many attempts have been made to provide this orphan music with a theatrical context: Victor Wilder's compilation "L'Oie du Caire" had some circulation in the eighteen-sixties; so did Hans Erismann's "Don Pedros Heimkehr" in the nineteen-fifties. This year, Paul Griffiths, the music critic of the London *Times*, assembled "The Jewel Box" from an overture, twelve arias, and five ensembles that Mozart composed for Italian comedies; it seems to have been well liked.

Mozart began "Lo Sposo Deluso" in 1783—when the Emperor Joseph II reëstablished an Italian company in Vienna—but abandoned it after bringing an overture, a quartet, two arias, and a trio to varying degrees of near-completion. His libretto (which may be by Giuseppe Petrosellini) was that of Cimarosa's "Le Donne Rivali," an opera that had appeared in Rome in 1780 and had also been played in Florence, Siena, and Venice. It could have been brought to Mozart's attention by Stefano Mandini, who sang the *primo buffo mezzo carattere* role in the Florence production and was intended

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for the same part in Mozart's version. Mandini was later the first Count. The first Constanze, Blonde, Susanna, Figaro, and Bartolo were also in Mozart's intended cast; he wrote their names into a revised manuscript of the libretto (which I suspect was concocted for him only after he had drafted the surviving numbers). Revised or unrevised, it is a weak, unentertaining libretto. We can rejoice that Mozart dropped it and composed "Figaro" instead.

Seven seasons ago, the Vineyard Theatre, with modest forces, put on a lively one-act version of "Lo Sposo Deluso," the plot tightened, the score amplified by two insert arias and by the concert *scena* "Ah, non lasciarmi, no" (which Mozart had composed for his future Ilia, but which proved not inappropriate to the "Sposo" heroine as she pretends to be a stern wraith haled from Hades). In April, as part of Lincoln Center's Mozart *intégrale*, the "Sposo" numbers were presented, by the Juilliard Opera Center, in the context of the Cimarosa setting. Will Crutchfield, who conducted, had scored the arias; at the main crossover point, Mozart's trio was followed by Cimarosa's version of the same text. The idea seemed good: a confrontation of Mozart's thoroughly composed music with the thinner stuff of a more successful Italian contemporary. But early Cimarosa is feeble (his "Matrimonio Segreto" is another matter), and from Mozart the libretto struck few sparks. There was wit in the enactment of a laconic duel, which Nels Hennum—described in the program as "the peripatetic maven of the necropoetic movement"—directed.

Last month, the Indiana University Opera Theatre, from Bloomington, brought Mozart's earlier—and exciting—opera "La Finta Giardiniera" to the Juilliard Theatre. The "Giardiniera," which was composed in 1775, for Munich, is no longer a rarity. The most exciting of its many modern productions have been those that seized on its strangeness—on the eighteen-year-old Mozart's instinctive, unconventional responses to a comic plot (the libretto may be by Petrosellini) that springs from an intended murder, includes a second murder attempt, and depicts a man and a woman driven by emotional conflicts to madness. Pasquale Anfossi had set this libretto the year before, for Rome, in a sprightly fashion. Mozart set it with all his might. A contemporary critic complained of "writing nearly always difficult and ingeniously wrought," such as "to defeat the power of assimilation of ordinary dilettanti," whether in majestic or in humorous episodes. The dark, violent productions of our day may be unhistorical—Mozart, engaged to supply a carnival entertainment, can hardly have intended to write a psychopathic drama—but they do emphasize what sets the "Giardiniera" above the operas of his Italian contemporaries: his rich musical working; his intense identification with the characters and their emotions; the force that was later to make "Don Giovanni" more than a merry comedy. Intricate melodies, elaborately developed forms, and wonderfully ambitious instrumentation serve dramatic ideals.

The Bloomington production—which omitted five arias and had other cuts—was unambitious. It stayed on the surface. Eighteenth-century comedy proves hard for students to enact. Frilly bows and curtsies, bent-knees shambling for the elderly buffo are not enough. No more than Eve Shapiro, the director of the "Sposo," had James Lucas, the director of the "Giardiniera," inspired the young singers to individual, characterizing gestures, demeanor, and utterance. The Juilliard acoustics are tricky; much depends on the set. The "Sposo" set, by Christopher Barreca, was an array of mirror screens, variously deployed, which was boring to look at but reflected the voices out into the house. The "Giardiniera" set, by Robert O'Hearn, was a pretty villa façade (with practicable front door and windows), center stage, with nine black wings on each side. The voices did not project well. I moved to the fifth row for Act III, as the house emptied, and only then began to hear them properly. There was a new translation, by Richard Strawn; the singers—Mark Jones's Nardo excepted—showed little command of natural English inflections. The players, conducted by Bryan Balkwill, were more graceful, accomplished, and accurate than those of the Juilliard, but they lacked spirit and bite: the first bassoon seemed scarcely aware that in Ramiro's "Dolce d'amor compagna" she has a solo role almost as telling as the singer's; the Gluck-inspired string writing, active and agitated, of the first-act and second-act finales was tamely rendered.

Mozart's first documented encounter with Gluck was in Vienna in 1768, when his father took him to see "Alceste." He was twelve. Gluck fired Mozart's ambition to write opere serie (although circumstances—specifically, Joseph II's taste—led him more often to comedy). In 1774, the year before the "Giardiniera," Gluck's first Paris opera, "Iphigénie en Aulide," was brought to performance, after long rehearsals. Its predecessors were the three reform operas that Gluck and Calzabigi created for Vienna: "Orfeo," "Alceste," and "Paride ed Elena." The last, which Mannes College presented so well in March, is the most subtly beautiful of the three. "Iphigénie en Aulide" is one of the grandest, boldest operas ever composed. No theatre, the composer said, could be too big for his "Iphigénie." (The Met might take note.) But Florence Gould Hall, which holds only four hundred people, did not prove too small when L'Opéra Français de New York presented it there in April. The grinding discord that starts the overture and is repeated at Agamemnon's first, blasphemous cry, "Diane impitoyable," promises majestic tragedy, and in the close acoustics it rang out with thrilling force. It is only an A-flat against G, but it shatters the C major of this life: Gluck used simple, direct means to move listeners to the depths of their being. His oboe's "cri plaintif de la nature" (played here by Karen Richardson) and the single, sustained bassoon note (played here by Kim Laskowski) that plumbs Clytemnestra's anguish in her third-act scena—perhaps the most potent single note in all music—were moments startling and piercing. Ill conducted, conventionally conducted, Gluck may seem to be the "never . . . technically accomplished composer" that Edward J. Dent deemed him, repetitious and uninventive. Well conducted, as he was here, by Yves Abel, he lives beside the great composers—Mozart, Wagner, Berlioz—who revered and were inspired by him.

I have heard Mr. Abel conduct

only Grétry, Bizet, and now Gluck. It has been enough to find him uncommonly capable. The choral forces of this "Iphigénie" were modest; the opera was not well staged and was not particularly well sung; but the musical direction and the playing were sensitive and strong. The drama—of men and women assailed by unbenevolent, irrational gods, and defiant, resentful, or piously submissive—attained tragic magnitude. Nathaniel Watson (Agamemnon), Karen Kassouni-May (Iphigenia), Jennifer Lane (Clytemnestra), and Gregory Mercer (Achilles) sang with expression; Mr. Mercer brought spirit to the very high tenor music. Gluck used the same chorus, "Let us set sail for Troy," to end both "Paride" and "Iphigénie en Aulide." In each opera, the conventionally triumphant strains carry tragic overtones to listeners who remember what carnage and destruction are being so blithely embarked upon.

THE New York Chamber Ensemble last month presented, in Gould Hall, a triple bill of operas by American composers, in concert performance. Two of the works were no more than diverting. Ned Rorem's "The Robbers" (1958)—its libretto drawn from Chaucer's "Pardoner's Tale," not Schiller—makes ingenious and neat use of a few thematic inventions and treats the wry anecdote amiably. Douglas Moore's "Gallantry" (1958) is a cheerful soap-opera spoof, punctuated by commercials; it seems a pale imitation of Bernstein's more tuneful, more troubled "Trouble in Tahiti" (1952). But John Harbison's "Full Moon in March" (1979), for four singers and eight players, was enthralling. I will not repeat all that I wrote about Yeats, Harbison, and the "Full Moon" after its Boston première but merely assert that this deftly composed, deeply felt, poetic opera is a work for the modern small-company repertory. Repeated hearings—the CRI recording, a London production, and now two New York performances—confirm it. The Chamber Ensemble cast was Julia Parks (the Queen), Richard Holmes (the Swineherd), and Nancy Allen and Scott Berry (the Attendants). Stephen Rogers Radcliffe conducted some of New York's best free-lance instrumentalists.

—ANDREW PORTER

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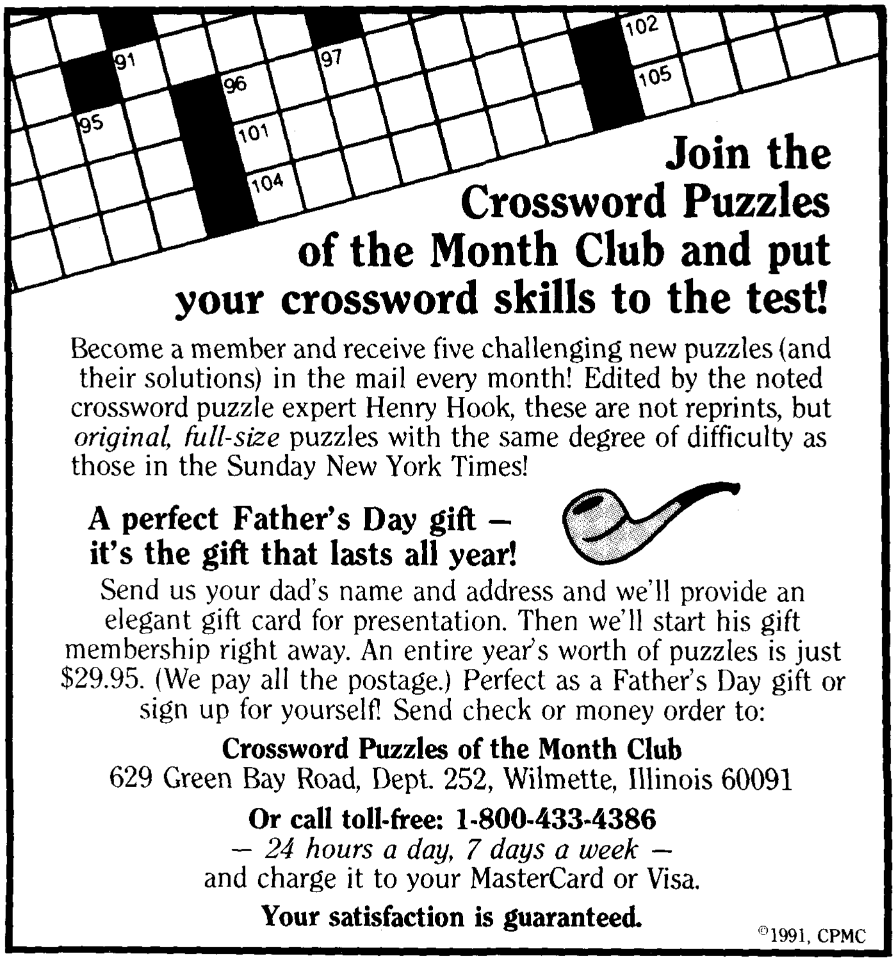

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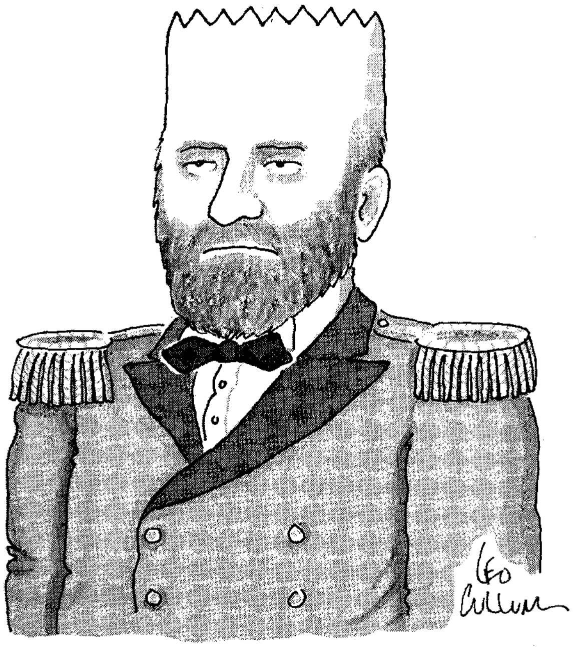
THE CURRENT CINEMA

Outlaw Princesses

Ridley Scott's "Thelma & Louise" is a crazily overstuffed Hollywood entertainment. Its heroines, played by Geena Davis (Thelma) and Susan Sarandon (Louise), are a couple of Arkansas women who set out for a weekend in the mountains and wind up speeding through the Southwest, on the run from the law. Following the tradition of movie outlaws, they're headed for the Mexican border; they cross a fair number of state lines, and genre lines, on the way. The act that puts the women on this reckless course is a murder. To get themselves in the mood for their carefree weekend, Thelma and Louise stop off at a roadside honky-tonk, where Thelma, elated at the prospect of a few days' freedom from her obnoxious husband, Darryl (Christopher McDonald), allows herself to be picked up by a smooth-talking cracker named Harlan (Timothy Carhart). After whooping it up on the dance floor for a while, Thelma, feeling sick, heads for the parking lot, and Harlan tries to rape her; Louise shoots him dead. They hop in Louise's convertible and flee the scene, because Louise is sure that the police won't believe the women's version of events; she thinks that Thelma's flirtatious behavior in the roadhouse would cast doubt on the story of attempted rape. Louise makes this radical decision, to go on the lam rather than face the skepticism of the authorities, instantaneously and with unanswerable conviction. For the audience, the moment requires a leap of faith that is far greater than the one the cops would have to make in order to believe the women's story. And it's only the first of a series of leaps that the script, by Callie Khouri, forces us to make if we want to stay with these unlikely desperadoes on their wild ride. The women have plenty of opportunities to turn back, but the movie is designed to keep pushing them farther and farther out there—past the point of no return, into the vanishing point of a vast Western landscape, and, finally, over the edge of the world.

Essentially, "Thelma & Louise" is an outlaw fantasy, and a mighty shameless one. The feminist justification that Khouri's script provides for the heroines' behavior doesn't make their actions any less preposterous: the characters would probably be more believable if the movie provided fewer explanations of their motives—if it allowed us to see their mad dash to the border as purely irrational (in the manner of, say, a Patricia Highsmith novel). The way the script is constructed, we sometimes feel, unfortunately, that the feminist ideas are being used opportunistically, just to keep the narrative moving—that every time Thelma and Louise have a chance to give themselves up, a man does something horrible and strengthens their conviction that they're better off on the run. The funny thing about "Thelma & Louise" is that you can recognize the crudeness of the script's devices and still have an awfully good time. The dopey ideas do at least give the picture some momentum: the heroines' flight is fuelled (however implausibly) by impulses that are more powerful than the usual road-movie anomie. The movie has the hellbent energy of a drive-in exploitation picture, and it's eventful—it isn't just figures drifting dazedly through alienating landscapes. Thelma and Louise are lively, voluble good old girls, and they're not given to brooding; they keep each other's spirits up. The audience's, too. Davis and Sarandon are so vivid and likable that they carry us past the plot's most obvious contrivances; a little disbelief seems a small price to pay for being allowed to remain in their company.



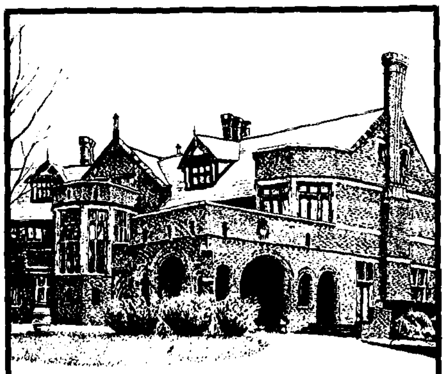
ULYSSES SIMPSON GRANT

Davis has the flashier role. Thelma is totally oppressed by her loudmouthed, beer-swilling, gold-chain-wearing husband, an irredeemable male-chauvinist goon. Despite her grim servitude to this pig, she manages to be pretty cheerful, in a girlish, spacey way. She seems never to have grown up; when she sneaks off, without telling Darryl, for her weekend with Louise, she giggles wickedly, like a teen-ager who has put one over on her parents. It's a wonderful role for Geena Davis: she gets to show off her (proven) talent for dizzy comedy, and to go through lots of emotional changes besides. In her best scenes, she does both at once. After a one-night stand with a sexy young hitchhiker (Brad Pitt, who has the sullen handsomeness—and the white cowboy hat—of the country singer Dwight Yoakam), Thelma sashays into the motel coffee shop with a big goofy grin on her face and tells Louise, "I finally understand what all the fuss is about." Davis's silly rapture makes this a classic scene, a sweetly funny image of sexual bliss. Throughout the movie, Davis's large, changeable features and her lanky frame serve the character beautifully; she seems to combine the malleability of a cartoon character—which isn't inappropriate here—with a kind of long-limbed Western grace. She gets terrific vocal effects, too: she produces a lovely comic music out of laughs and shouts and drawls. Davis is spectacular, but Sarandon, whose character has a less extreme emotional range, is every bit as good. Louise, a fortyish diner waitress who's involved with a kindhearted but unreliable musician (Michael Madsen), is steadier, world-wearier, and more practical than her young friend. She has a been-there look about her, and she doesn't trust people much; she's always scolding Thelma for striking up conversations with strangers. (And her suspiciousness always turns out to be justified.) In many scenes, Sarandon plays straight person to Davis, and does it with the skill and good humor of an extremely confident actress. She trains a penetrating, no-nonsense stare on her companion's antics; her looks of affectionate disbelief often mirror the audience's reactions. And when she breaks down and laughs, giving in to the craziness around her, her abandon is infectious. Sarandon holds our attention by not betraying her character's emotions too readily. Her held-in quality makes an effective contrast to Davis's overflowing exuberance, and it has its own power, too; in a sense, Sarandon's mysterious straight-ahead intensity is what propels the story forward.

There's an exhilarating ease and intuitiveness in the way these actresses work together; we feel, and share, their pleasure in surprising each other. "Thelma & Louise" is at its best in its most casual, most aimless-seeming moments, in the dawdling intervals between "important" scenes, while the women are just zipping down the highway and trying to figure out what to do next. (Or why they did what they did last. They often seem as dumbfounded by the story as the audience is.) And Ridley Scott provides an abundance of moments like these: scenes in which the women tease each other or get on each other's nerves or sing along with the car radio, as their hair blows all over their faces. The camera lingers on Davis and Sarandon as if it couldn't get enough of them: Scott seems to want to show us what they look like in every kind of light and every kind of mood. The director's entranced gaze slows down the rhythm of the narrative; quite a lot happens in this movie, but it has a leisurely, expansive air. Scott—the director of "The Duellists," "Alien," and "Blade Runner"—is known for his striking, even overpowering, visual style: the compositions in his films are meticulous, shiny, and elaborately textured. They frequently look too good to be true, and Scott has sometimes been seen as just another member of a school of filmmakers who developed a slick, manipulative craft in the British advertising industry—directors like Alan Parker ("Midnight Express" and "Mississippi Burning"), Adrian Lyne ("Flashdance" and "Fatal Attraction"), and Ridley's brother Tony Scott ("Top Gun" and "Days of Thunder"). Ridley Scott isn't really that kind of filmmaker, though. He has never been a cynical manipulator of audience reactions. He's a romantic, and rather an innocent and credulous one, at that, investing everything he works on with the passion and enthusiasm of an imaginative child. His images have a true believer's intensity, and if they're not always persuasive it's perhaps because Scott isn't terribly selective about what he believes in.

His fabulist's sensibility does wonders for "Thelma & Louise." He dances attendance on the outlaw princesses who are his heroines, and treats every stage of their journey as an occasion for awe. Truck stops, mesas, motel pools, deserted country roads, messy kitchens, and the packed ladies' room of the honky-tonk all have a hyperreal gleam to them, a luminous expressiveness. When Thelma and Louise are on the road, the movie has the look of a mirage, a jewelled shimmer that keeps us half hypnotized. (The trance is broken periodically by the intrusion of banal plot mechanics: cutaways to the police investigation, under the direction of a sympathetic cop played by Harvey Keitel. These are the movie's clumsiest scenes; we can feel Scott's impatience to get back to the women.) Scott's love of the women and the landscape doesn't quite transform Khouri's gimmicky, rabble-rousing script into something profound, but it has the welcome effect of softening the hard edges of the story; it gives the whole movie a pleasantly dreamy quality. In the end, "Thelma & Louise" seems less a feminist parable than an airy, lyrical joke about a couple of women who go off in search of a little personal space and discover that they have to keep going and going and going to find a space that's big enough.

"AN ANGEL AT MY TABLE" is based on the autobiography of the New Zealand novelist and poet Janet Frame. It covers the first forty years or so of the writer's life—she was born in 1924—and takes close to three hours to tell the story. When it's all over, you feel that you know far too little about Janet Frame and far too much about the film's director, Jane Campion. Frame's life doesn't seem to have been



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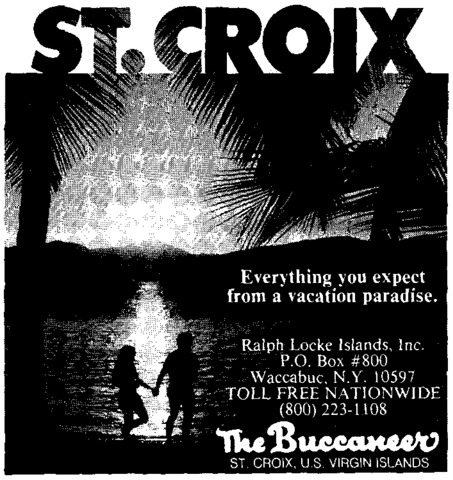
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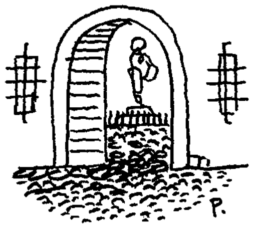
a particularly dramatic one. She grew up shy and literary, in a working-class family that moved around a lot, being shifted from town to town by the father's employer, the railroad. Her childhood and adolescence were, by her own account, spent in a kind of happy isolation from the world, within the safe confines of her affectionate family and her own imagination, which was fired by sentimental poetry and popular songs. Aside from the sudden death of her older sister, nothing much happened to Janet until she left home to go to teachers college in the city, where she found herself painfully ill-equipped to deal with the emotional demands of the outside world. In the autobiography she says, "Writing now, I am impatient with my student self that was so unformed, ungrownup, so cruelly innocent. Although I had no means of knowing if other students lived in such innocence, I have since learned that many, in timidity and shyness and ignorance, lived as bizarre a life as I . . . . Our lives were frail, full of agonies of embarrassment and regret, of misunderstood communication and strong with the intense feeling of wonder at the torrent of ideas released by books, music, art, other people; it was a time of finding shelter among the mightily capitalled abstractions of Love, Life, Time, Age, Youth, Imagination." Frame's struggle, as a writer and as a woman, was to find a way out of this tortured confinement in herself, and she took some giant steps backward before she was able to make any progress. While she was still a student, she suffered a breakdown, and was diagnosed (inaccurately) as schizophrenic; she spent years in mental institutions, where she received hundreds of shock treatments. The success of her writing helped her escape the institutions; eventually, she travelled to Europe, became more confident of her talent, and grew comfortable enough with people to be able to have a sexual relationship. (She was in her mid-thirties when she lost her virginity.)



The Janet Frame of Campion's film doesn't seem to have any inner life—not as a child, not as an adolescent, and not as an adult. And without that she has no life at all. The movie (which was made as a three-part miniseries for Australian television) is a succession of odd, mannered tableaux, more or less in the style of Campion's 1990 art-house hit "Sweetie," which was a static, self-conscious black comedy about an inarticulate young woman and her grotesquely infantile sister. Campion's compositions emphasize the peculiarities of Janet's appearance, especially in her childhood and awkward adolescence: she has a stiff, frizzy mop of bright-orange hair, and her teeth are badly decayed. Janet is played by three actresses: as a child, by Alexia Keogh; as a young teen-ager, by Karen Fergusson; and as an adult by Kerry Fox. As Campion has directed them, they're all morose and affectless; none of the performances gives us much of a clue to what Janet is thinking or feeling. You'd hardly know, for example, that Janet consciously adopted "schizophrenic" traits after her diagnosis: when it suited her, she used her supposed madness as a form of self-protection. Her breakdown and her periods of hospitalization are the pivotal dramatic events in this story, yet the movie's treatment of them is so flat and elliptical that we're unable to respond.

Throughout the film, Campion's imagery has a skewed, alienating quality that can be very effective: there's a distinctive strangeness in the way she places people in their environments, a trompe-l'oeil sense of unease. Unfortunately, her narrative technique has a similar effect. Time after time, we find ourselves unable to orient ourselves in crucial scenes, because the director hasn't bothered to establish the characters or the setting; whole sequences go by in which we're not sure where we are or whom we're watching. You might suspect that this is the filmmaker's way of forcing us to share her heroine's sense of dissociation from the world. But Janet couldn't possibly be as dissociated as the audience is; at times, we can't even identify the members of her family with any certainty. Writers' lives are weird enough without being subjected to this sort of willful disruption of their emotional continuity. Campion's perverse exercise in biographical filmmaking deserves a new title: "My Incomprehensible Career."

—Terrence Rafferty

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KEEPERS OF THE FLAME

Tom Mix played a good man who rode into a new town and innocently got into trouble. Then he had to solve the troubles. He only managed to solve the troubles after a series of crises that demanded the most dangerous stunts imagined.—*Explanatory text, Tom Mix Museum, Dewey, Oklahoma.*

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TOM MIX

BEFORE I met Richard Seiverling, my grasp of the facts and the significance of Tom Mix's existence amounted to not much. This was true despite two coincidences: first, I grew up in northeast Oklahoma, within easy driving distance of the Tom Mix Museum, and, second, as I negotiate the routine chores of everyday life I am guided by an interior dramatic vision of self, a psychic simulcast, almost identical to the heroic persona and exploits of the legendary cowboy movie star. Richard Seiverling—who has earned a couple of graduate degrees and likes to be referred to as Dr.—is the founder and chairman of the National Tom Mix Festival. When I phoned him a while back, a few weeks before the eleventh annual festival, to get driving directions to his home, in Hershey, Pennsylvania, he asked, as he evidently does whenever he deals with a member of the Fourth Estate, "Do you need me to be dressed in Western regalia?" My plan was to tour the second floor of Dr. Seiverling's house, where he has installed a private museum—a collection of artifacts documenting his life and its intertwining with the life of Tom Mix. Because I didn't intend to take photographs, I suggested that he wear whatever made him comfortable. A spotty, cool rain was falling when I arrived in Hershey, headquarters of the candy company, and each moist air molecule seemed to have bonded with a fresh warm cocoa molecule, bathing the landscape in a sweetly fragrant pale-chocolate fog. Dr. Seiverling, who has blue eyes, gray hair brushed straight back, and a softly pleasant, uncowboylike face, greeted me dressed in a manner that implied local chauvinism—chocolate-brown slacks, belt, and necktie, a cream-colored dress shirt, and a cream-colored sports jacket.

The downstairs portion of the house, where Dr. Seiverling and his wife, Gladys, have lived since 1963, was rigorously tidy, with nothing that hinted at the rich, variegated lode upstairs. Before I could get a close look at that, however, Dr. Seiverling proposed that we sample the noon buffet in the Circular Dining Room at the Hotel Hershey, and as we drove there and then ate our lunch he began to fill me in on the National Tom Mix Festival.

"This is a labor of love," he said. "Planning the festival that's coming up has become almost a full-time job for me. It's been causing me a lot of stress. But it's still a labor of love."

The eleventh festival—the first to be held outside Pennsylvania—was to take place in Las Vegas. Dr. Seiverling's background and loyalties are all-Pennsylvania. He was born in Lancaster County, and is an alumnus of the Hershey Industrial School and Hershey Junior College. He earned his bachelor's degree from Lebanon Valley College, in nearby Annville, a master's degree in education from the University of Pennsylvania, and a doctorate in education from Penn State, and he spent almost his entire professional career with the Pennsylvania State Department of Education. He is now seventy years old. When he was in his late fifties, Gladys Seiverling advised him that with his retirement years approaching he needed an avocation.

"My wife said, 'You'd better get yourself a hobby,' and the first thing I thought of was Tom Mix," he told me. "He was my boyhood hero. I had saved a lot of Tom Mix memorabilia, which I'd collected as a result of going to see Tom's movies or listening to his radio program. When I was nineteen and a cub reporter for a weekly newspaper called the Ephrata *Ensign*, I got to interview him, and I had my picture taken with him. That was in June, 1940, three and a half months before he was killed, in an automobile accident. I'd looked at the memorabilia in the intervening years, but I hadn't thought about them a lot."

In 1979, when Dr. Seiverling began to think seriously again about his hero, the centennial of Mix's birth and the fortieth anniversary of his death were only a year away. Not surprisingly, the merchants in DuBois, the town in western Pennsylvania to which the Mix family moved, from the backwoods hamlet of Mix Run, when their son was eight, did not require excessive prodding to go along with Dr. Seiverling's idea of an annual Tom Mix festival. Among the special guests at the first festival was Kurt Klotzbach, a journalist from Dortmund, Germany, whose book "Tom Mix—König der Cowboys" Dr. Seiverling esteems as an indispensable contribution to the ever-expanding corpus of Mix hagiography. Attracting a Mixophile as exotic as Kurt Klotzbach conformed to Dr. Seiverling's sense of what the festival might become—an internationally recognized annual ritual devoted not to nostalgia but to a celebration of stalwart, manly courage. Thanks to a thoughtful donation from the Hershey Corporation, Dr. Seiverling was able to arrange a nice photo opportunity: Kurt Klotzbach receiving a five-pound chocolate bar.

"We did it as planned," he said. "We brought in a photographer and I gave him the big chocolate bar. But guess what! Kurt's a diabetic. He couldn't enjoy it."

The festival had a ten-year run in DuBois. Attendance was steady. Thousands of out-of-towners, who were not necessarily deep-dyed Mix lovers, would show up for the centerpiece parade. Much smaller crowds would drop in on film screenings and swap meets that Dr. Seiverling orchestrated. Across the years, however, a series of small and large disagreements accumulated. Before Mix impersonated a cowboy, he had been a bona-fide range-riding cowboy. In almost all his film appearances, he did his own stunt work. As a circus performer, he drew worshipful crowds all over America and Europe. "We have had our differences," Dr. Seiverling told me, his polite way of saying that what the DuBois organizers thought of as appropriate National Tom Mix Festival-related activities—tobacco-spitting and bed-racing contests—were not what he had in mind when he contemplated ways to glorify the memory of the most accomplished and charismatic cowboy who has ever lived. "Let's put it this way," he said. "I was never smiling when I went to the bank." When he learned last year that the Imperial Palace Hotel & Casino, in Las Vegas, had added to its collection of antique automobiles the 1937 Cord 812 Phaeton Coupe that Mix was driving at the time of his fatal accident, he decided to get in touch with the new owner.

"Promoting this festival is just a big P.R. job," he said. "I had to convince people at the Imperial Palace that this was worth their while. They didn't come after me, in other words. I had to write three different proposals. I can tell you that the logistical challenges for this festival far exceeded my expectations. For instance, I'm planning to take gifts of chocolate to all the Imperial Palace P.R. people—but what if it melts?"

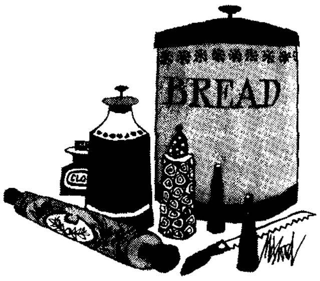
"WHAT you're looking at is Cowboy Corner," Dr. Seiverling said when he guided me to the second floor of his house and I got my first glimpse of his museum. Roughly half the upstairs floor space was occupied by the museum, which was L-shaped; the other half was a bedroom that the Seiverlings' grown daughters or grandchildren or such guests as Kurt Klotzbach use when they come for a visit. (The Seiverlings' own bedroom was downstairs.) Cowboy Corner was a telephone-booth-size niche filled with photographs. One double frame featured, on the right, Tony II—a white Arabian that was the successor to Tony, Jr. (the Miracle Horse), himself the successor to Tony the Wonder Horse, the equine prodigy memorialized in a hundred and fifty or so early Mix movies and in Dr. Seiverling's 1980 treatise "Tom Mix and Tony: A Partnership Remembered"—and, on the left, the picture of Mix and the nineteen-year-old Richard Seiverling taken at the time of the 1940 Ephrata *Ensign* interview. Nearby were two autographed photographs of Mix and a wide-angle shot of the entire company of the 1935 Tom Mix Circus and Wild West Show. There was also a montage that included many of Mix's contemporaries from the oaters—among them Buck Jones, Ken Maynard, Hoot Gibson, William Desmond, Bob Steele, Fred Thomson, William S. Hart, Pee Wee Holmes, and Leo Maloney—lined up beneath a portrait of Dr. Seiverling at the age of forty-five astride Dolly, the first horse he ever owned. On a shelf in Cowboy Corner was a collection of souvenir pins from the first eight National Tom Mix Festivals, and also a souvenir oversized coffee cup, slightly smaller than a chamber pot—one of a limited edition of four from the 1982 festival. Dr. Seiverling said, "I got one of these, one went to the Tom Mix Festival Committee, one went to the DuBois Chamber of Commerce, and who do you think got the other one? A fellow by the name of Willard Scott. I think you've probably heard of him."

As it happened, 1982 was the first year that the Ralston Purina Company, which had sponsored the radio program "Tom Mix Ralston Straight Shooters" during the thirties and forties, sent a representative to the festival. Subsequently, the company hired Dr. Seiverling as a consultant and reintroduced Mix-related gift premiums to consumers of its hot-cereal products. These promotional items, which Dr. Seiverling and his like-minded pals recognized as instant collectibles, included a comic book titled "Tom Mix and the Taking of Grizzly Grebb"; an eight-by-ten photograph of Mix and Tony, Jr.; a sew-on cloth patch with the Tom Mix brand; two LPs of old radio broadcasts; a cereal bowl; and a wristwatch with Mix's image on the face. Dr. Seiverling showed me a specimen of each. In 1983, the wristwatch sold for a box top plus nineteen dollars and thirty-three cents. "I'll be taking this with me to Las Vegas," he said. "I know of one dealer who hoarded these, and last year was selling them for two hundred dollars apiece. I don't plan to let mine go for less than two-fifty."

When we ventured out of Cowboy Corner and into the main part of the museum—an area about ten by twelve—Dr. Seiverling took from a shelf an antique wooden Straight Shooters pistol. "In 1933, one box top and ten cents would get you one of these," he said. "I had no problem with the box top, but I did with the ten cents. Well, I wanted that gun badly, so I waited. I waited and waited. I waited fifty years. I got this gun in 1983, and I paid a hundred and twenty-five dollars for it. If I'd had a hundred and twenty-five dollars in 1933, I could have bought the Ralston Purina Company."

Dr. Seiverling's pedigree as a Straight Shooter dates from 1927, the year his mother recorded on an index card the recipe for a concoction that she took the liberty of calling Tom Mix Chocolate Cake. He showed me that. He showed me thirty-six Danish Tom Mix comic books from the thirties. He showed me a Tom Mix hobbyhorse; a 1934 photograph of Tom and Tony, Jr.; a 1934 catalogue of Straight Shooters premiums; a still from "The Great K & A Train Robbery," which he rated "among the best William Fox films that Tom Mix made"; a Ralston Purina photomontage of stars from the radio show (among them the very young George Gobel); photographs of four of the five Mrs. Tom Mixes; and five spent cartridges from a Tom Mix shooting exhibition (sent to him by a woman in Ohio and impossible to authenticate). He showed me his collection of Big Little Books: novels (or, in some instances, novelizations of Mix's films for Universal Pictures), also from the thirties, whose immediate aesthetic virtues—vividly colorful covers and pocket-size convenience—were matched by the bristling vitality of their prose. I picked up "Tom Mix in the Range War" and read on the first page, "A vicious WHIR-R-R-R at the side of the trail brought lightning action. Tom Mix twisted in his saddle, his right hand streaking to the big forty-five Colts at his hip. Tony, his trail-wise horse, danced lightly aside on quick, sure hoofs, snorting his anger at the writhing, evil-eyed little reptile which was gliding through the sage-brush stems."

Regularly, Dr. Seiverling receives overtures from people who mistakenly assume that his passion for Tom Mix has rendered him feebleminded. "For instance, I got a call a while back from a dealer in Little Rock, Arkansas," he told me. "She said she had a saddle blanket worn by Tony. She was willing to sell it for, as I recall, six hundred dollars. Naturally, I asked her, 'How can I authenticate that it was really worn by Tony?' And she said, 'I thought you were a Tom Mix fan.' And I said, 'I am, Madam. But I'm not a nut.' And she hung up."



We pored over the contents of two leatherbound volumes of sepia, brown, and purple penny-arcade cards, the cream of Dr. Seiverling's collection of five thousand. "In 1927, I got my first Tom Mix arcade card in Rocky Springs Park, in Lancaster, and I've been collecting them ever since," he said. "I will trade any arcade card of any cowboy for any Tom Mix that I don't already own. I swap these all the time. The only tricky part of swapping by mail is: Who sends it first?" Several cards depicted the Mix mansion, in Beverly Hills. "You see the front door in these pictures, right? That's the one I have the front-door assembly to." From Cowboy Corner he retrieved an oblong cardboard box, opened it, and removed a peephole, a door knocker, and a door latch of unpolished gray metal, about eight pounds' worth. These objects came into his possession, he explained, in 1987, when he went to Los Angeles to pay homage to the mansion and other Mix-related shrines and was unable to repress an urge to introduce himself to the present occupants of the house.

"The owner, who wishes to remain anonymous, had replaced the door assembly but had saved this. She sent her butler to the basement and he retrieved it," he said. "When she handed it to me, she said, 'I've been waiting all these years to give this to the right person.' That's a nice story, isn't it? Sounds dramatic, doesn't it?"

We made excursions to the other sections of the museum: to Education Corner (framed diplomas), to Family Corner (mainly pictures of the Seiverling daughters, and not to be confused with His and Her Corner), to Military Corner (photographs documenting Dr. Seiverling's service during the Second World War, and in Korea, and twenty-seven years with the Army National Guard; his Bronze Star and Purple Heart; and also the remnants of his collection of Second World War—mainly Nazi—artifacts, most of which was deaccessioned a decade ago to pay off debts incurred by the first National Tom Mix Festival). But we always returned to Tom Mix.

After about three hours, knowing I had a two-hundred-mile drive ahead of me, I suggested to Dr. Seiverling that he was probably ready to send me on my way. This he interpreted as a cue to open an album of photographs of Tony the Wonder Horse and of Mix's other horses. "Now, here's another aspect that I haven't shared with you," he said—a favorite phrase of his. The horses reminded him that we had not yet discussed "Tom Mix: Portrait of a Superstar—A Pictorial and Documentary Anthology," a book he had been writing for the past ten years. "Obviously, these are pictures I'm getting ready for my chapter titled 'Mix's Magnificent Mounts,' " he said. "As you'll see, I'm a great one for these alliterations."

Several drawers of a sideboard in Military Corner were full of book material, most of which had already been set in type and made camera-ready. It was clear to me that Dr. Seiverling had no wish to diminish the accomplishments of Kurt Klotzbach or of M. G. (Bud) Norris, the author of "The Tom Mix Book" (1989), or of Paul E. Mix, the author of "The Life and Legend of Tom Mix" (1972) and of the recent monograph "Tom Mix: The Formative Years." Earlier, describing Bud and Paul to me, he had said, "Now, these are both avid Tom Mix fans, and they are both excellent resource people." Nevertheless, as he recited the table of contents of his book his natural modesty began to elude him. "My book represents a whole different approach," he said. "It will

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THE morning the festival opened, two weeks later, I tracked Dr. Seiverling down as he was finishing his breakfast in the Emperor's Buffet, one of eight restaurants in the Imperial Palace. What recommended the Emperor's Buffet was not its cuisine but its proximity—a distance of less than ten yards, with only a keno parlor and a bank of slot machines to divert traffic—to Royal Hall A, a six-thousand-square-foot exhibition space that had been rechristened the Tom Mix Festival Memorabilia Room. Dr. Seiverling was seated with Serge Darrigrand and his wife, Brenda, both members of the festival staff, and with Hal Verb, who had come to Las Vegas from San Francisco at his own expense to display his amateur skills as a comic impersonator. All three men wore Western regalia. Dr. Seiverling's and Hal's costumes were understated and generic. Serge, on the other hand, who was the official Tom Mix look-alike—a man of indeterminate age equipped with the requisite chiselled jaw and cheekbones, prominent nose, oversupply of teeth, and brilliantined dark hair—had paid conspicuous attention to detail. He had on a dark-brown bib-front shirt with cream piping and with an authentic-looking TM monogram on the left sleeve, cream-colored slacks with dark-brown piping, a trademark wide-brimmed ten-gallon hat (black), a white neckerchief, and shiny brown boots. This getup made it not immediately obvious that for the past twenty-six years he had worked in a General Motors hydromatic plant in Ypsilanti, Michigan.

With the opening of the festival only an hour away, Dr. Seiverling excused himself to finish setting up his exhibit in the Memorabilia Room. Serge, who had stashed his spurs behind one of Dr. Seiverling's display tables, was headed there, too. Going along with him and his wife, I asked about his career as a look-alike.

"I've been involved with horses all my life," he said. "You know the saying—once a cowboy always a cowboy."

"And Serge has always dressed Western," his wife said.

"I used to dress more like Buck Jones than like Tom Mix," Serge continued. "I did sharpshooting at the Stage Coach Stop. It's also called Michigan's Village of the 1800s. It's in the Irish Hills, near Clinton, Michigan."

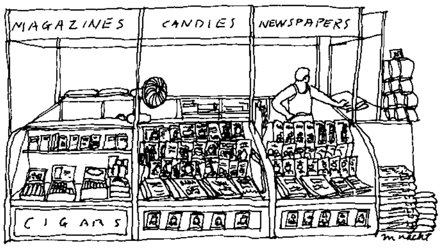
"That's why he's known as the Michigan Cowboy," Brenda said.

"I've been doing sharpshooting since I was fourteen years old. The first time I saw a Tom Mix movie was in 1957, at the Henry Ford Museum, in Dearborn. It was 'Riders of the Purple Sage.' People had always been telling me I looked like Tom. I wasn't at the first Tom Mix Festival, but after I heard about it I got in touch with Dick Seiverling. I sent him some pictures."

"Pictures don't tell the whole story, but after Dick saw Serge, and then Hickman Hill, Tom's grandson, saw Serge in person they were convinced," Brenda said. "And Serge decided that if he was going to do it he'd do it absolutely authentic."

All of Serge's cowboy shirts are made by Brenda and patterned after an actual Mix shirt that is in their possession. "An elderly man who'd retired up to the Dakotas sent it to us," Brenda said. "His mother had worked on the movie sets, in the costume department, and she had this shirt. He was old, he had no children, so he gave it to Serge. It's made of some kind of orange cotton, I would say. It has the regular T-bar-M—Tom's brand—on the sleeve."

That Serge looked a lot like Tom Mix was plain to see, and I gathered that the similarity would have seemed even more striking if I could have viewed Serge in profile, perched on his horse Dynamite and cantering across a television screen. I asked whether he often got accosted by admirers.



"Even if he's just in the supermarket wearing jeans and a black cowboy hat, people recognize him," Brenda said. "They stop us and say they saw him in a parade, or whatever. Serge has ridden in the Tournament of Roses parade for six years now. I have to admit that teen-agers don't remember Tom Mix. But they know that Serge looks like someone. With them, the name that comes up a lot is Johnny Cash."

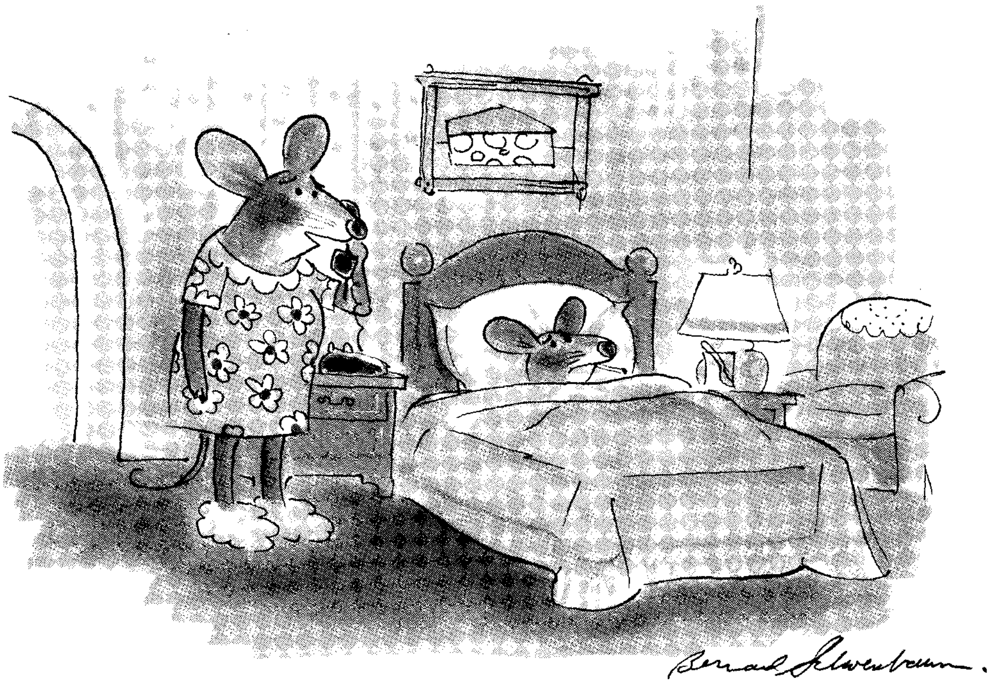
As Serge knelt to strap on his spurs—silver, with jinglebobs and double-spoked rowels—I asked how tall he was.

"Five-eight in my stocking feet, almost five-ten in my boots," he said. "According to the Tom Mix Museum, he was about five-eight. According to the movie-studio publicity departments, though, he was six feet. I wrote to the Blucher Boot Company, in Fairfax, Oklahoma, and found out that not only were we the same height but we've got the same size foot. When he died, they had an order ready for him, a size 8D with two-and-three-quarter-inch heels."

I caught up with the Darrigrands again later that morning, in the Tom Mix Theatre, a partitioned-off section of Royal Hall B that had been equipped with chairs, a couple of film projectors, and a portable movie screen on a tripod. We had just watched the 1932 classic "Destry Rides Again" (not to be confused with the 1939 classic of the same name, starring Marlene Dietrich and James Stewart) and were waiting while the projectionist rewound it and prepared to thread another 1932 classic, "Hidden Gold," into one of the projectors. To keep the audience stimulated, Brenda commandeered a hand-held microphone. She could have got by without amplification—there were only about a dozen of us in the audience—but the microphone lent a show-biz tingle to the proceedings.

First, Brenda introduced Hal Verb. He led off with an impression of Ed Sullivan and then presented Ed's special guests Gabby Hayes, Gary Cooper, James Stewart, Rodney Dangerfield, Al Jolson, Ronald Reagan, and Richard Nixon. After Hal was done, Brenda said, "Now, ladies and gentlemen, I'm going to introduce you to a man you've already met if you've been to the Memorabilia Room," and Serge, who had left when the lights went up, came on for a sharpshooting demonstration. The Tom Mix Theatre was only about ten yards wide and Serge was using live ammo, but the bullets were made of wax, and that reduced the chance of serious ricochet injuries. From eight paces, he aimed a Colt revolver at some small balloons that had been attached to an upright plywood table six feet in diameter. He connected squarely with the first two balloons, then, with his back to the target and a mirror in one hand, missed a couple of times, then, turning around, popped a couple more. His final trick involved suspending a kitchen knife between two balloons so that its blade could split a wax bullet—a two-in-one shot. When he squeezed the trigger and nothing happened, Brenda said, "I'd like to tell you that Serge has done this many times. He doesn't usually forget to reload." There was a patch of dead air as Serge reloaded, and Brenda filled it by describing how, during his routine visits to nursing homes and in his talks with Boy Scouts, Serge stresses patriotism, obedience to parents, and gun safety. Then Serge gave it another try, and it worked.

After "Hidden Gold," a transportation hybrid that featured horseback chases and car chases ("It's the cops!" "Come on, step on it!") and some canyon-size plot holes, I wandered back into the Memorabilia Room. There I met Gene Gammel and Melbourne Robison—respectively, a sergeant on the Reno police force and a salesman and commercial photographer who works for an outfit that sells novelty T-shirts. They told me they had just endured a hair-raising transportation adventure of their own. "We're in a real pickle," Gene said. "We just pulled in on a bus from Tonopah, about two hundred miles from here. Our car broke down on the way from Reno last night. That car has a hundred and thirteen thousand miles on it, but it's never given me that kind of trouble before." Breakfast at the Emperor's Buffet—especially the cold scrambled eggs—had not dulled the memory of their bus ride.



"Does the doctor make mouse calls?"

• •

B-Western fans cross-pollinate in endless permutations. Melbourne, who specializes in Buck Jones—he owns two of Buck Jones' "personal pistols," including the one he was carrying the night he died, in the famous Cocoanut Grove fire, in 1942—happens to own one of Mix's hats. He also has a sideline in Daisy BB-gun memorabilia. Six years ago, Gene began collecting Roy Rogers and Hopalong Cassidy artifacts, or what he calls "Roy and Hoppy stuff," and he takes pride in his accumulation of Lone Ranger and Cisco Kid souvenirs.

"There's a guy back East who's documented over twenty-three hundred Hoppy items," he said. "I've got over four hundred myself, and that's not counting comic books. In the fifties, there were a million members of the Hopalong Cassidy Troopers. It rivalled the Boy Scouts."

It was Gene who exploded for me the myth of the cereal-box-premium decoder ring. "There were a lot of rings offered as premiums, and there were several types of decoders, but nobody made a decoder ring," he said, contempt creeping into his voice. "Nevertheless, I'm always hearing guys talk about how rich they'd be if their mamas hadn't thrown away their Tom Mix decoder rings or their Captain Midnight decoder rings. Right."

A couple of weekends a month, Gene and Melbourne hit the road and look for Roy and Hoppy and Buck stuff. They like to visit flea markets and street fairs in places like Folsom and Old Sacramento. One of their techniques is to arrive before sunrise, while the traders are still setting up. At that hour, Gene and Melbourne have to compete with other collectors, who try to gain an edge by wearing miners' helmets.

"He didn't really know about collecting until he met me," Gene said of Melbourne.

"That's true," Melbourne acknowledged. "I didn't really understand how to access stuff."

What made the trouble with Gene's car so inconvenient was the demand of another of Melbourne's passions—camel racing. He was a past vice-president of the International Order of Camel Jockeys, and he was due that weekend in Virginia City, four hundred miles north, to compete in a camel race. Also, his nine-year-old daughter, Rachel, was supposed to join him there. A dentist friend from Texas who usually raced ostriches but dabbled in camels was coming out to Virginia City to get married on camelback, and Rachel was to be a flower girl of sorts. Before Melbourne left Las Vegas, however, he wanted to get his hands

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on six Buck Jones arcade cards in Dr. Seiverling's collection.

As the founder and chairman of the Tom Mix Festival, Dr. Seiverling had had a direct hand in the layout of the Memorabilia Room, the perimeter of which was lined with exhibitors' tables. Practicality had forced him to leave certain items behind in Hershey—his hobbyhorse, his fragile Danish comic books, the door knocker to the Beverly Hills mansion—but he had brought plenty of treasures, both priceless and negotiable, including his albums of arcade cards; a lock of hair from the mane of Tony the Wonder Horse (circa 1929); his Straight Shooters wooden pistol; nouveau Ralston premiums (Ralston Straight Shooters Club membership card, sew-on insignia, Tom Mix watch, and catalogue); posters from previous Tom Mix Festivals; a couple of hundred copies of "Tom Mix and Tony: A Partnership Remembered," priced at five dollars apiece; a couple of dozen two-by-three-inch engraved Tom-and-Tony mirrors; Tom Mix Chewing Gum booklets; thousands of Tom-and-Tony stamps, which he had printed himself; a 1935 letter from Joe Bowers, of Beverly Hills, to Miss Vandella Moyer, of Lebanon, Pennsylvania, written on Tom Mix Circus and Wild West Show stationery; two copies of "Tony and His Pals," a 1934 collaboration by F. M. and H. M. Christeson, priced at fifty dollars each; and several Big Little Books, priced from twenty to twenty-five dollars, among them "Tom Mix Plays a Lone Hand," "Tom Mix in the Fighting Cowboy," "Tom Mix in the Range War," "Terror Trail," "The Rider of Death Valley," "Texas Bad Man," and "Tom Mix and the Hoard of Montezuma."

Dr. Seiverling said, "Incidentally, I should point out that Bud Norris's collection of Tom Mix Big Little Books is probably the most inclusive and comprehensive in existence, and it's in the best condition of any I've seen. I'm negotiating with him right now for a copy of 'Flaming Guns'—it's the hardest one to find, and he has an extra. So far, we haven't been able to agree on the terms."

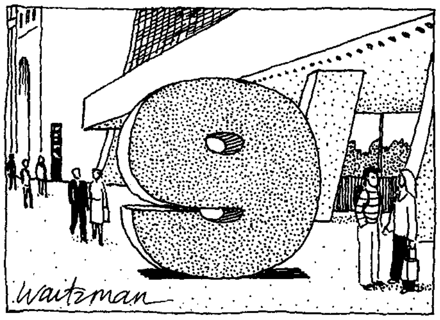
Dr. Seiverling's exhibit covered several tables and extended along much of one wall, turned a corner, and blended into Bud Norris's exhibit—with only a bouquet of red carnations, the gift of Dominick Marafioti, of Rochester, New York, who was the national chief of the Buck Jones Rangers of America Club, separating them. Flanking Bud on the other side was Paul E. Mix, whose grandfather was Tom's first cousin. "I was born in 1934," Paul said. "The only time I saw Tom was when I was five years old. My Uncle Leroy took me and held me up on his shoulders. This was at the Clearfield County fairground, in Clearfield, Pennsylvania. He said, 'Over there, wave at Cousin Tom.' I don't know if I remember it because I remember it or because I was told about it so many times." Paul worked on "The Life and Legend of Tom Mix" from 1964 to 1970. When he wasn't busy researching or writing, he was an electrical engineer for Du Pont. I'm told that the book is quite good, but I haven't actually read it, because Paul had only one copy for sale in Las Vegas and he wanted a hundred dollars for it. A while back, the book's printer mistakenly destroyed the photographic plates of the pages.

I discovered, to my gratification, that Dr. Seiverling and Bud Norris, Western civilization's two most fervid non-blood-kin authorities on the life of Mix, do not allow themselves to indulge in petty rivalry but, rather, are magnanimous mutual boosters. Bud is grateful for the energy that Dr. Seiverling has devoted to the festival planning across the years, and Dr. Seiverling, for his part, has only praise for Bud's methodology as a scholar and collector. "Bud's accumulation of factual information is really kind of encyclopedic, especially regarding filmography," Dr. Seiverling said, referring to "The Tom Mix Book." "His book is probably the most thorough of its kind. Now, I'll let other readers and historians decide where to place my book when it comes out. I feel that my book, whenever it's published, will make its contribution and take its place."

At the time of the festival, Bud was six weeks away from retirement, having spent thirty-five years as an employee of the United States Postal Service in Columbus, Ohio. "The Tom Mix Book" was the culmination of a fifteen-year effort that is part of an almost seamless fifty-year continuum. Lionizing Tom Mix, Bud told me, "is a lifelong disease for which there is no cure." His collection, which is particularly strong in Ralston Straight Shooters radio premiums, reflects a forthright approach to connoisseurship: almost everything is in mint or near-mint condition. It is displayed in the Tom Mix Memorial Theatre and Archives, in the basement of his house, in Columbus—like Dr. Seiverling's museum, a by-appointment-only operation. Less than ten per cent of the collection was on view at the Imperial Palace. "I tried to get some variety, and then packed in as much as the van would hold," he said. His portable display cases contained Straight Shooters items that no one else seemed to have—a telescope, a signal arrowhead, spurs, a bandanna, a sun watch, a pocketknife, a rocket parachute. He also had an ample inventory of "The Tom Mix Book," at twenty-four ninety-five. The book was dedicated to his mother, who not only "bought the cereal so I would have the box tops to send away for Tom Mix toys," he wrote, but also had the foresight to preserve the toys for posterity. The other woman in his life, his wife, Peggy, was helping to collect tickets at the Memorabilia Room door and projecting a consistently cheerful attitude, which I found noteworthy in the light of a fact about the Norris marriage which Bud shared with me. "I've told Peggy if our house catches fire I'm gonna grab my Tom Mix stuff first and then grab her," he said. "And she knows I'm not kidding."

From Dr. Seiverling I learned that Bud, if he was asked to identify virtually any production still from a Mix movie, could recite its provenance and the accompanying dialogue with alarming accuracy. Bud himself, however, says that Peter Schauer, a free-lance cinema archivist from Vienna, and Janus Barfoed, a film historian from Copenhagen, possess skills in this regard superior to his own. In the introduction to "The Tom Mix Book" he thanks Schauer at length for his help in compiling the book's filmography, and on the acknowledgments page he cites Barfoed. At the Imperial Palace, Schauer manned a table directly across the room from Bud, and, as far as I could tell, had made the trip all the way from Vienna not to sell anything but just to hang out with pals. He was an amiable man with a mustache and what appeared to be a serious appetite for *Topfenstrudel*, and he spent most of the weekend seated in a folding chair, welcoming conversation with anyone who cared to discuss Mix or ancillary topics. When I inquired about the source of his admiration for Mix, he said, "I think this man was the best ambassador America has ever had." Barfoed, who was attending his second festival, had brought along several dozen movie-lobby posters and other carefully preserved items of B-Western promotional material, all for sale, and also prints of two rare silent films, "Den Glade Tom" and "Hest Contra Bil." Their screening had been scheduled by Dr. Seiverling for the "matinée extravaganza," on the final day. Though both films were released in the United States during the First World War, the whereabouts of any English-language versions ("The Conversion of Smiling Tom" and "Taking a Chance") were unknown. Not only would the prints from Copenhagen bolster Mix's reputation for physical courage and masculine charm but their intertitles would demonstrate his fluency in Danish.

In all, the festival attracted fewer than a dozen official exhibitors, some more Mix-specific than others. They included Colonel William O. Mueller, of Livermore, California, whose array of one-of-a-kind items included a pair of elaborately engraved silver six-shooters that he said had awesome sentimental value, because Mix had given them to him, but that could be pried from his possession for a hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars; Oliver Drake, an eighty-seven-year-old former producer, director, and screenwriter of Westerns, who was hawking his memoirs at eighteen bucks a pop; Leo Reed, a veteran of the Tom Mix Circus and Wild West Show, who credited his youthful experiences as a roustabout, ticket-taker, and cotton-candy salesman with enabling him to overcome his natural shyness; Michael Lyonais, of Maple Valley, Washington, a dealer in and collector of Native American and Old West artifacts; and Russ Campbell, a hatmaker from Seattle.



An average of three hundred paying customers a day would have pleased Dr. Seiverling. It became evident early, however, that this figure was quite optimistic and that problems with crowd control were unlikely to arise. Daily tickets sold for five dollars. The first thing a ticket-buyer noticed, smack in the center of the room, was the canary-yellow supercharged Cord Phaeton Coupe that Mix had died in. The car had been carefully restored after the accident, subsequently changed hands a few times, and was obviously regarded as an important fixture of the Imperial Palace's collection, right up there with Hitler's Mercedes and the Alfa Romeo that Mussolini gave his mistress. For nine dollars and ninety-five cents, Dr. Seiverling was selling four-inch replicas of the Cord. He had also persuaded the Franklin Mint to donate a 1/24-scale model, and he planned to give it away as a raffle prize.

It is an article of faith that all Mix devotees undertake certain pilgrimages, and high on the list of obligatory sites is Mix Wash, the spot on the road near Florence, Arizona, where Tom Mix lost control of the Cord (as it careered into a dry creek bed, he received a mortal blow to the neck from a metal suitcase), and where there is a memorial marker, a stone cairn crowned with a riderless bronze horse—unless, as can and does happen, vandals with blowtorches have recently paid a visit and reduced it to a horseless cairn. True disciples also flock to the birthplace, in Mix Run, Pennsylvania; to the boyhood home, in DuBois; to the site of the 101 Ranch, near Marland, Oklahoma, where he put in four years cowboying; to the Tom Mix Museum, in nearby Dewey ("Mecca for Mixomaniacs, the museum houses the largest collection of personal belongings of our hero," Bud Norris has written); to the pavement outside Mann's Chinese Theatre, in Los Angeles, where Tom and Tony left impressions of their hands, feet, and hooves; to the mansion in Beverly Hills; and to Forest Lawn Memorial Park, in Glendale, California, which was Tom's next, and final, stop after Mix Wash (and where Bud, when he visited it recently, left a red rose; Dr. Seiverling, who accompanied him, left a yellow rose).

Other than the death car, Las Vegas has no historical connection to the life of Mix. Even before the festival set up shop at the Imperial Palace, a consensus existed among Dr. Seiverling and the other members of the festival staff that there was a need for a new, permanent home for the festival, with low overhead and rich historical significance. DuBois had, of course, ceased being an option. When you got right down to it, the big crowds in DuBois were nothing but tourists, fly-by-nighters who didn't know a Ralston Straight Shooters' Manual from an L. L. Bean catalogue. Their genuine interest in Mix ran about as deep as their genuine interest in Amish folkways. They were no more likely to go out of their way to lay a yellow rose on Mix's grave than they were on Mr. Ed's.

So one item of business that Dr. Seiverling had to address in Las Vegas was the future. Bud had mapped out a post-Las Vegas itinerary that called for him to travel an indirect route back to Ohio, with a stop at Forest Lawn and another in Florence. And as long as he was in Arizona it made sense for him to check in with some people in Tucson who had expressed interest in creating a home for the festival there. Old Tucson had a lot of charm and was within easy driving distance of some of the locations for the Selig silent one-reelers from the early years of the Mix œuvre. Another possibility was Guthrie, Oklahoma, a preservation-conscious town that was the home of the Blue Belle Saloon, where Mix tended bar eighty-six years ago. If Guthrie had an inside track—as I gathered it did—it was because the executive director of the Guthrie Chamber of Commerce and the landlord of the Blue Belle Saloon had troubled themselves to come to Las Vegas to talk numbers.

"The Blue Belle is where Tom Mix first made his mark," I overheard Dr. Seiverling tell the Guthrie boosters at one point, as if reciting a script that they might have written. "He was a bartender, and also a drum major in 1904 for the Oklahoma Cavalry band. Two of his wives were from Oklahoma. He did his first cowboying for the old Miller Brothers 101 Ranch. I visited that a couple of years back. Obviously, Guthrie has the advantage of having the locale that is historically significant in the life of Tom Mix."

"It's hard not to like it," the Chamber of Commerce man agreed. "There are a lot of things going on there. You know, the world's largest Masonic temple is there. Also, the world's largest privately owned indoor rodeo arena."

The Blue Belle landlord said, "I know the governor, and I'm sure he would designate an official Tom Mix Day"—a prospect that Dr. Seiverling seemed to find tantalizing.

ABOUT thirty people showed up in the afternoon at the Tom Mix Theatre for a silent film called "Trailin'" and a talkie called "The Fourth Horseman." Again Serge performed at intermission, and again Brenda provided a play-by-play that was both scripted and improvised. In three attempts, Serge failed to split a bullet on the knife blade. Holding a pair of six-shooters and crossing his wrists, however, he connected with one mounted balloon and with one that Brenda was holding in her hand—an act of bravery that she announced entitled her to a Caribbean cruise. Serge was followed by Ted and Ruth Reinhart, who operate a country inn in Alexandria, Pennsylvania, and bill themselves as the Singing Sweethearts. The Reinharts are exponents of so-called pure Western music, which they croon while wearing matching regalia with maximum froufrou. Ted had a plummy voice and a manner that suggested a Jonathan Winters version of an aggressively friendly cowboy. He said, "Thanks again, Serge Darrigrand, our very fine, competent Tom Mix look-alike." Then he sang "I'm a Cowpoke Pokin' Along," one of his favorites. Ruth was pretty and had prematurely graying hair and a high-wattage smile that went great with bright-red lipstick. When she sang "Home on the Range," she recruited three unsuspecting men from the audience to back her up with coyote howls—a move that I took as a warning to head back to the Memorabilia Room. There I noticed that Colonel Mueller was idle. First, I reminded myself of something Hal Verb had told me—that to place the Colonel's reminiscences in proper perspective it was "often necessary to separate fiction from fiction"—and then I introduced myself and asked which branch of the armed forces had commissioned him.

"I'm a colonel because I spent nineteen years in the Army," he said. "Doing what? Government service, that's what. From the age of sixteen until I went into the Army, I used to spend my summers with Tom Mix. I have never capitalized on Tom, because he was too close to me. Let these goddam yoyos who had their pictures taken with him one time and think they knew him—let them capitalize."

The Colonel had a close-cropped gray beard, a voluble, raspy, nicotinized voice, and an arthritic condition in both hips which forced him to depend on a cane. He was dressed in black and wore dark-tinted wire-rimmed eyeglasses. For two dollars he was selling autographed copies of "The Life and Times of the Fabulous Tom Mix," a typescript memoir that began with the moment in 1920 when the future colonel was six years old and living in Cincinnati and, through the intervention of his father, had a face-to-face meeting with his hero. "I guess he took a liking to me," the Colonel wrote, and his narrative continued:

> I'd go out in the summer time and see Tom whenever he was geographically within 100 miles of me. When he'd go over to New York and go overseas to make his tours, I would go to New York and bid him a bon voyage. When he would get into Washington to do a command performance for the President, I would go there and visit with him and Tom always put $100 bill in my hand and told me to always be a straight shooter and make something of myself.

The typescript was bound inside another reminiscence, which Colonel Mueller printed up a few years ago, and in which he recalled being sixteen years old and receiving a Colt six-shooter from Mix—"the first gun he bought when he came out of the Army." Colonel Mueller listed some other gifts: a 101 Ranch badge, an Oklahoma deputy badge, a Texas Ranger badge, spurs, a Stetson, and lots of pictures. In nearly four hundred films, Colonel Mueller wrote, "Tom Mix never drank, smoked, chewed or swore—or kissed an actress," feats of self-restraint that the Colonel was not claiming to have accomplished personally. Nor, as it happens, would Mix have been able to make such a claim truthfully; in "The Tom Mix Book" Bud Norris has catalogued cinematic episodes of smoking, drinking, gambling, kissing leading ladies, and uttering oaths like "Dammit to hell." I sensed, however, that Colonel Mueller would not be receptive to this information.

A plastic binder on a table in front of the Colonel contained dozens of photographs of Mix and an assortment of other provocative material, including publicity stills of an actress who Colonel Mueller said was one of his ex-wives. "That's my No. 5," he said when I got to that page. "She was in all the Sean Connery movies. She got the house in the Isle of Man. A million bucks. They each got a million bucks."

"What year were you two married?"

"Shit, now you're pinning me down," he said. Lowering his voice, he added, "Listen, the reason I hesitate is, I'm not even sure we ever got divorced, to tell you the goddam truth."

Once it had become clear to Colonel Mueller that I wasn't going to buy the engraved silver six-shooters, he showed me a Tiffany silver hip flask with a TM monogram. "Sid Jordan gave him that flask," he said, referring to the sharpshooter and longtime sidekick who appeared in scores of Mix movies. Twenty-five hundred dollars, give or take, would buy the flask.

Splaying the bejewelled fingers of his right hand, the Colonel said, "Tom gave me that ring when I was twenty-one years old. That's a seven-and-a-half-carat emerald and three and a half carats of diamonds. And that ring he gave me when I was thirty. It's a three-and-a-third-carat diamond."

I tried running some numbers through my brain—when Colonel Mueller turned thirty, hadn't Mix been dead four years?—but got distracted by a pocket watch engraved "Thomas Edwin Mix," a keepsake from a Masonic-rites initiation ceremony. I remarked that Dr. Seiverling had told me—and Bud had pointed out in his book—that Mix's given middle name was Hezekiah, which he later changed to Edwin. The Colonel said, "Listen, he had to give his fucking right name to become a Mason. What does that

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watch say? 'Thomas Edwin Mix.' There's more assholes that'll tell you more shit."

Hidden between stills of Mix and Ken Maynard was a photograph inscribed "To Col. William Mueller, With Best Wishes, Ronald Reagan."

"Oh, no, I covered up Ronald?" he said. "That asshole. What did Reagan *do wrong*? I'll tell you what. He made legitimate businessmen of the savings-and-loans thieves, and look at all the poor people he hurt. And I'm not telling you anything I wouldn't say to his face, and, in fact, already have."

The Colonel showed me a photograph of a handsome, slender young cowboy, lariat in hand, posed against a split-rail fence. I asked who it was.

"That's me, when I was twenty-one years old. I was an extra on 'The Miracle Rider.' I did two Wild West shows at the 101 Ranch, in 1931 and '32. Those were the days. Well, the days weren't bad, but the nights . . ."

A man called Ewing (Lucky) Brown stopped by. It seemed he had made a career as a bit player in Westerns and had known Mix's daughter Thomasina. He remembered some guns she had once shown him. "If you're into his guns, maybe you could answer a question for me," Lucky Brown said.

"I'm not into his guns. The man gave me those guns," Colonel Mueller said. "He gave me nine guns—six Colt single-actions and three Winchesters."

After that, the conversation never quite achieved a tone of cordiality.

"Another expert," Colonel Mueller said before Lucky Brown was out of earshot.

One other impressive item that Colonel Mueller had on display was an enlarged copy of a black-and-white diagram that had appeared regularly in editions of the Ralston Straight Shooters' Manual. This was the official Tom Mix injury chart, which purported to identify only the most serious of his actual wounds—traumas that were consequences of his having been "blown up once, shot 12 times and injured 47 times in movie stunting." According to an explanatory note, he had been "shot by cattle rustlers in Texas . . . shot twice in left arm by Oklahoma outlaws . . . shot below elbow by outlaw . . . shot through abdomen by killer he arrested . . . shot by bad man while Oklahoma sheriff . . . shot in leg when 14 years old . . . shot through leg by bank robbers . . . shot through elbow in real stage coach hold-up . . ." For graphic simplicity, the diagram omitted the "scars from twenty-two knife wounds" and "the hole four inches square and many inches deep that was blown in Tom's back by a dynamite explosion."

"Tom Mix lived nine lives before he ever made a picture," Colonel Mueller told me.

I told him this was the first copy of the diagram I'd ever seen.

"Yeah, I'm surprised, with all these supposed Tom Mix collectors in this room, I've got the only one here," he said.

I thanked the Colonel for his time and was headed toward the casino for a breather when I ran into Gene Gammel and Melbourne Robison.

"We saw you talking to Colonel Mueller," Gene said. "Get an earful?"

I said I had.

"Did he show you the picture of himself when he was twenty-one?" Gene asked.

I said he had.

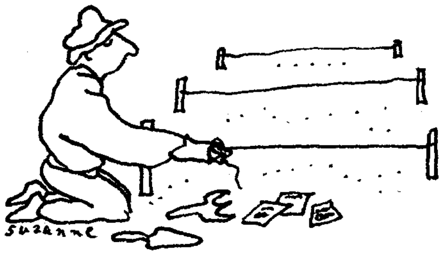
"You know, he showed me that picture one time at a show in Reno," Melbourne said. "I thought it looked familiar, and when I got home I checked in a reference book and, sure enough, there it was."

"Only, it wasn't the Colonel," Gene said.

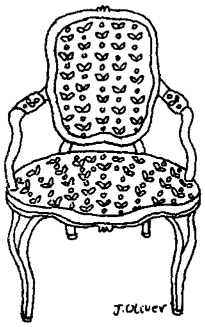
An expression of shocked dismay must have registered on my face, because Gene rested a comforting hand on my shoulder.

"It was an actor named Allan (Rocky) Lane," Melbourne said. "Actually, it was a pretty well-known picture. Otherwise I don't guess I would've remembered it. Yep—Allan (Rocky) Lane."

DESPITE the light turnout the first day—fewer than a hundred tickets were sold—Dr. Seiverling was in a sanguine mood when I found him that evening at his station in the Memorabilia Room. I had just sat through "Riders of the Purple Sage" in the Tom Mix Theatre, and had decided to skip "The Man from Texas." Leo Reed, the veteran of the Tom Mix Circus and Wild West Show, had joined Dr. Seiverling, and so had William E. Thrush, a Mixophile from Las Vegas. Bill Thrush was recounting his dealings with an impostor, a woman who years earlier had claimed to be an illegitimate daughter of Mix and also to be an actress who was a stand-in for Clara Bow. "Do you realize she got five thousand people to give her a standing ovation at a benefit in Beverly Hills in 1981?" he said. "I had to go after her with all the powers at my disposal. Of all the common women I have seen in my life—and I have seen a *lot*—there was nobody that could come close to her."



Somehow, Dr. Seiverling managed to guide the conversation to his magnum opus, "Tom Mix: Portrait of a Superstar." He had the page proofs handy. "What do you think of that, Leo?" he said, riffling the chapter on Mix's circus career. "All right, Leo, here we are with the Sells-Floto Circus in 1929. And here's a souvenir program from 1930. Still Sells-Floto. Always in this pose on Tony the Wonder Horse. The circus was headquartered in Peru, Indiana. Now, here's a montage of posters. He spent 1934 with the Sam B. Dill Circus, but when Dill died that's when he bought it out and the next year it became the Tom Mix Circus and Wild West Show. They wintered in Compton, California. Here's a group picture from, I think, 1935. Here's a 1936 photo. Here we have a chart of dates played from 1934 to '37. Now, Leo, you were with the circus the entire 1935 season. I can get those route books for 1935 and show you the itinerary, day by day. Wherever you were, I can go right to the route book and give you every performance. Now, here I've reproduced the pages from the 1937 route book. Here's Ruth Mix, in 1938. Shortly after this photo was taken, he went on his European tour. And by then, you can see, of course, its name has been changed, and it's just the Tom Mix Circus. In 1938, it seems there was no route book—that's when the circus folded up. O.K. Here's the quintet touring Europe that spring, while in the U.S. the circus was falling apart. Did you ever see a better picture than that one of Tom clowning around? Now, over here you've got Tom with the Lord Mayor of London. Here's a lot of baloney that he told the newspapers in England. If you think Tom told some whoppers, wait till you read the story of how the redskins captured him. And then here on the left is the picture on top of the Savoy. Here he is riding in London. Here he is standing with Tex McLeod. Here he is in Hyde Park. Maybe you can tell me who the girl is—she's in a lot of these pictures. Now, Leo, these are pictures that have never before been seen in this country. Then he goes to Germany—here's Billy Jenkins, the German Buffalo Bill. I just want to show you the finale. He goes now to Denmark. Here he is in Denmark while the circus is failing in the U.S. Those are very rare pictures. I'll bet you never saw these—Tom Mix in his military ribbons. He never wore these in the United States. And here's Mabel in 1944, performing as Mrs. Tom Mix, with, I think, Tony III."



Dr. Seiverling also had a proof of the book's jacket illustration—an electric-hued image of Tom and Tony the Wonder Horse, which he had discovered on a mid-thirties cigar box. "We all know what four-color separation can cost, but this is the way Tom Mix would've done it," he said. "The only hitch is Tom had a little more money than I do."

There was a momentary silence, during which we became aware that the easy-to-eavesdrop-upon Colonel Mueller, across the room, had a captive audience of two—the affable Hal Verb and an equally affable member of the hotel's P.R. staff. "Now, look," the Colonel was saying. "Listen to me. I worked for the F.B.I. and the C.I.A. There's certain things I can't tell here. But listen carefully. You want to talk about who killed J.F.K. All right, let's start with who convicted Jimmy Hoffa . . . ."

Stacking the page proofs neatly, Dr. Seiverling returned them to a manila envelope, laid the envelope on the table, and slapped it firmly with his palm. "Now, gentlemen," he said. "You talk about research. *That's* research for you. It's no longer a project. It's an *obsession.*" He looked each of us in the eye and solemnly nodded.

The next morning, I watched "The Rider of Death Valley," a convincing demonstration of Mix's knack for existential drama. "Death Valley fills me with terror," says Lois Wilson (playing a character named Helen). Mix (playing a character named Tom) replies, "I kind of like it myself. It doesn't pretend to be anything it isn't." Then they spend the rest of the movie getting thirstier and thirstier. Afterward, I found Dr. Seiverling where I expected—in the Memorabilia Room, engrossed in conversation. He was talking to Bob Wolter, a collector from Reseda, California, who evidently had access to an important trove of Mix's belongings.

"I won't say who has it, just that it's the people who sold his personal items to the Tom Mix Museum," Wolter was saying. This description was insufficiently elliptical; I knew he was referring to a man in Van Nuys, and Dr. Seiverling, of course, did, too. I was flattered that Wolter, having just met me, had sized me up as a potential predator.

"There's a Big Little Book I've been after for three years," Dr. Seiverling said. " 'Flaming Guns.' "

"Bud has it, you know," Bob Wolter said.

"I know, but it's not the only copy in the world and he's asking a lot for his."

In a manner that struck me as less than tactful, Wolter went on to describe a watch that the man in Van Nuys was offering to sell for two hundred and fifty thousand dollars. Dr. Seiverling and I let that number sink in.

"And, you know, your friend in the corner there"—Wolter used body language to indicate Colonel Mueller—"just sold the watch that Olive gave to Tom for his twenty-ninth birthday, in 1909. And it's authentic. It's engraved, and everything. He sold it for twenty-five hundred."

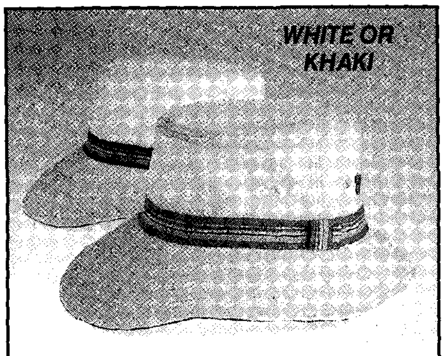
Dr. Seiverling shook his head, as if remembering a dead friend.

"Well, Dick, that's a good price."

"Maybe," Dr. Seiverling said, unconvinced. "You know, I love Tom Mix, but I sure won't remortgage my house for him."

"Don't worry about that Big Little Book, Dick. I'm gonna get it for you."

After Wolter departed, I asked Dr. Seiverling whether he had a strategy for separating "Flaming Guns" from Bud. Simply paying the sixty dollars



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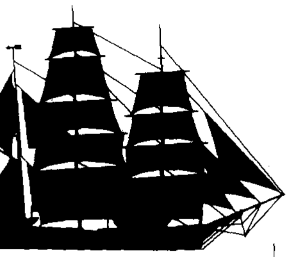
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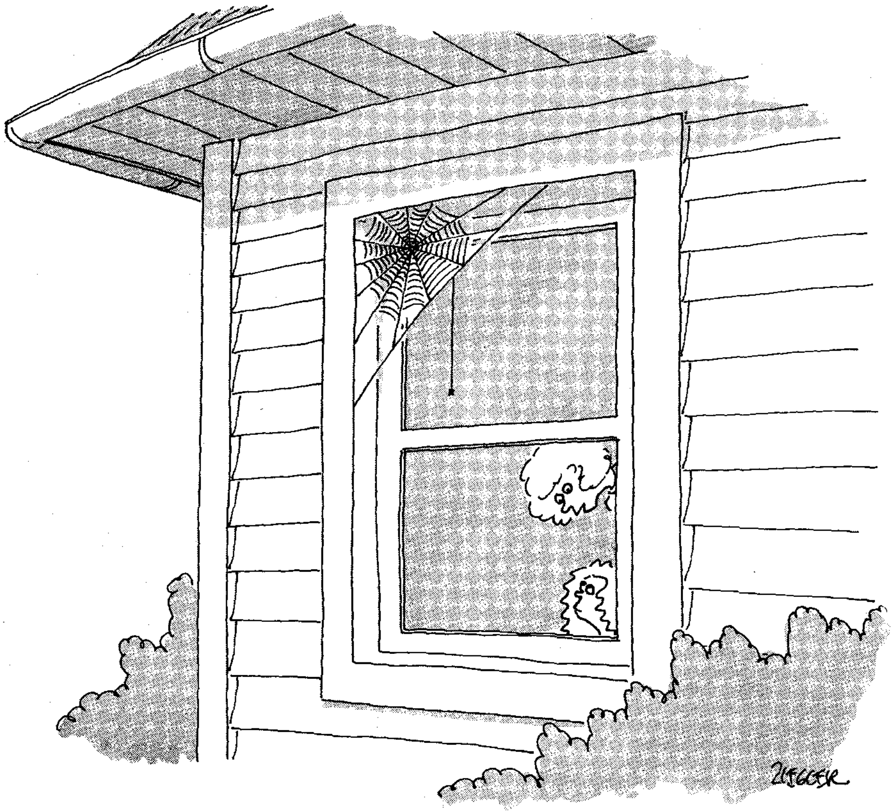

"We can't imagine what a spider thinks, Louisa, because it's a whole different life style."

• •

Bud was asking, I understood, was an approach he opposed in principle. And yet he had to have it.

"My objective by the end of the festival is to induce him, and I think I'm going to prevail," he said. "What is the inducement? To get that book, I'm willing to give him a one-of-a-kind item—a wall clock with the same four-color picture of Tom Mix that appears on the cover of his book. There it is, right down there." Not only is Dr. Seiverling a collector and purveyor of Mix memorabilia; he is a promulgator of it. The custom-made clock, its walnut face decorated with the laminated image of Tom and Tony, was displayed next to a cardboard box that contained entries for the matinée-extravaganza door-prize drawing.

"How are you going to give him this wall clock if it's being raffled off?" I asked.

The smile on Dr. Seiverling's face said that he was several jumps ahead of me. "This one here is eight by eleven, and the one I'll be offering him is eleven by fourteen."

"But then you'll have your Big Little Book but you won't have a clock."

"I can always have another one made."

"But then you won't be offering him a one-of-a-kind item."

"But he won't know that," Dr. Seiverling said.

Because he is a thoroughly scrupulous person, I knew he didn't really mean that. It was just a symptom of how his desire to acquire "Flaming Guns" on his own terms was confusing his moral logic. I wanted to suggest that Bud's copy seemed to be in mint condition and ask why he didn't just go ahead and pay the sixty bucks, but that would have been out of line.

"I think you realize the only way you can enhance or increase your collection is by swapping," Dr. Seiverling said. "I'll own a copy eventually."

I missed the start of that evening's screening—the double feature "Just Tony" and "Rustler's Roundup"—because I got busy witnessing a conversation between Janus Barfoed and Peter Hogue, an English professor and film historian from California who was researching a critical biography of Ken Maynard. They were scrutinizing some arcade cards, including one of an actor named Eddie Cobb, who was misidentified in the caption as Fred Gilman.

According to Barfoed, the Exhibit Supply Company, the chief manufacturer of arcade cards, was notorious for making mistakes of this sort. He showed me a production still from "The Fourth Horseman," and said, "This says that the character of Gabby was played by Raymond Hatton. But Raymond Hatton doesn't even appear in the movie. How they came up with that I have no idea."

Barfoed is a slightly built gray-haired man who grew up in Slagelse, fifty miles west of Copenhagen. Even in the cowboy hat that he wore all weekend, he managed to look exactly like a Danish film historian. "It was Tom Mix's visit to Denmark with his circus in 1939 that made me a collector," he said. "My mother's brother was a rancher in Panama. I have an aunt who believes in reincarnation and says that in an earlier life I was a cowboy." His favorite star is Maynard, and then comes Mix. He once met Maynard, and in 1968 he spent several days in Montana with another of his idols, Wally Wales. Western films made after 1954 hold no interest for him. During the German occupation, members of the Danish Resistance bombed the office of a German film-production company—a favor that the Nazis returned by destroying the headquarters of a company that distributed films made by Universal, Paramount, and Republic studios. As a result, the posters and other artifacts that Barfoed owned became much rarer and more valuable. At Det Danske Filmmuseum, where Barfoed is curator of stills and posters, his boss has expressed limited curiosity about his extensive private collection of Western-movie memorabilia. "In Denmark, I am the only professional film historian interested in this material," he told me. "In fact, I believe you could safely say I am the only Grade B-Western nut in all of Scandinavia."

BEFORE the festival, I had been to Las Vegas a few times, but never with enthusiasm. Only once had I stayed longer than twenty-four hours and that was almost thirty years ago, when my parents detained my brothers and sisters and me for three days at the Desert Inn. (That tour of duty was also the occasion of my single sublime Vegas moment: each of the Mills Brothers gave me his autograph.) Anticipating four nights at the Imperial Palace, I had envisioned the usual dreads and frightening temptations—the orange food-warming lamps at the buffets, the ubiquitous TV sets all tuned in to golf tournaments or dog races, the gaming tables and their relentless processions of chinless Fellini extras, the long panty-hosed legs and exploding bodices of the casino hostesses—and they had loomed as a daunting challenge to my emotional stamina. As the final day of the festival dawned, I forced myself to account for the way I had spent my time, and realized, oddly, that I wanted it all to go on much longer. I had ventured out of the hotel only once, briefly, to buy talcum powder and postcards. I had not paid my proper respects to the Imperial Palace's antique-automobile collection, much less to the white marble statue of Joe Louis across the street at Caesars Palace. Forty-eight hours had passed during which I had not even seen the sky. I had gambled only intermittently, and, unsatisfyingly, had broken even. I had visited with Art Evans, a white-haired, string-tied, former parks-department employee from Coquille, Oregon, who in the early hours of the first day of the festival had paid twenty dollars—a steal, by consensus—for a Tom Mix Western Comic Book No. 1 but still was more than twenty shy of a complete collection of sixty-one. (Art Evans was also the only man on the premises with a baseball autographed by Mix, and it had been autographed by Bob Meusel, Chuck Dressen, and Jimmy Foxx as well.) I had conversed with Frank Finn, a John Wayne look-alike who worked as a satellite technician at the NBC studios in Burbank, and who had actually got to know, and had received an inscribed glossy photograph from, the real Duke, back in the days when he would obligingly appear on "Laugh-In" in a sunny suit. I had failed, however, to muster the energy to chat with Jim Mecate, who showed up one afternoon in parade-calibre regalia—a Roy Rogers look-alike, someone explained to me.

"But isn't this guy Filipino, or something?" I asked.

"Well, if Roy had been Filipino, that's what he would have looked like," I was told.

On my way out of the Emperor's Buffet the last morning, I saw Gladys Seiverling perched in front of a quarter slot machine. She had a determined look on her face and a bucket full of quarters in her lap. Trying to win enough to stake her husband to "Flaming Guns," I thought for a moment, but then I remembered something Dr. Seiverling had said when he was showing me through his collection in Hershey: "Now, mind you, the money for this does not come out of the household budget." In her attempt to beat the stuffing out of the slots, Mrs. Seiverling was trading for her own account.

"Obviously, today will have to be the banner day, because it's the final day" was the first thing Dr. Seiverling said to me that morning. I wasn't about to press him on how ticket sales had been going. His mood, in any event, was typically upbeat. The matinée extravaganza was scheduled for that afternoon, and two of Mix's grandchildren, Vickie and Dan Matthews, would be on hand. The grandchildren had dropped by the previous day, but I hadn't met them. I had got the news from Colonel Mueller.

"Hey, kid, Tom Mix's granddaughter was here," he told me. "I said to her, 'Do you have anything personal of your grandfather's?' She said, 'Not a thing,' so I told her, 'Well, you do now.' Remember that little horseshoe charm I had here?" He pointed to a spot on his black leather vest. "It was a pair of dice studded with seven diamonds. I gave it to her. Then I said, 'Now, do you want to feel your grandfather? Pick up that gun.' And she held that Colt in her hand, and it broke me up. Seeing her holding that gun just broke me up. I had tears running out of my fucking eyes."

The Matthewses were the youngest children of Thomasina—the daughter of Tom and his fourth wife, Victoria Forde.

"I'm named after my grandmother," Vickie said when I was introduced to her, just before the matinée. "Our two older brothers are Tom and Tony."

"If my brother Tony was named after the horse, then we figure our grandfather must have owned a dog named Dan and that's who I'm named after," Dan said.

Vickie, who runs a Montessori school in Ojai, California, was wearing boots, a suède skirt and vest, a silk blouse, a souvenir straw hat from one of the

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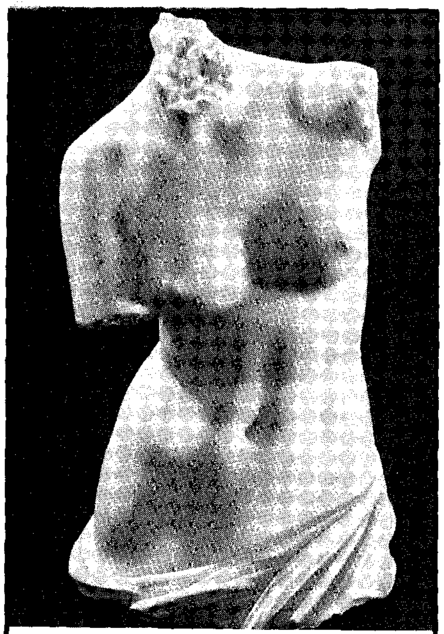

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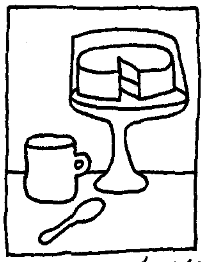
festivals in DuBois, a silver necklace with a TM-monogram drop, and the diamond-studded horseshoe-and-dice charm that Colonel Mueller had given her. Dan, a computer consultant in Lakewood, California, had not previously owned any Western regalia. He wore bluejeans, a pair of boots borrowed from his nephew, a bolo tie borrowed from a friend of Vickie's, and a felt cowboy hat and a leather vest that he'd bought on the Strip the day before.

Originally, the matinée extravaganza was to have been held in the Imperial Theatre, which is the site of "The Legends in Concert," a nightly stage show featuring impersonators of no-longer-breathing show-biz giants. The Imperial Theatre has a capacity of more than eight hundred. When it became apparent that the matinée extravaganza was not likely to draw a crowd of more than sixty, the venue was shifted to the Tom Mix Theatre. The ever-cheerful Ted Reinhart introduced Dr. Seiverling, who wore a light-blue Western-cut suit and a solid-navy necktie embroidered in white script with "Tom Mix and Tony."

"Thank you, Ted, and, once again, welcome Straight Shooters," Dr. Seiverling told the gathering. "I hope you all have your Tom Mix Ralston Straight Shooters wristwatches on. It's Ralston time. We're very glad that we've been able to bring our Tom Mix Festival from the mountains of Pennsylvania to the glittering lights of Las Vegas, here to the Imperial Palace Hotel. We don't know exactly what's in store for the Tom Mix Festival. It appears that since we've traded the mountains of Pennsylvania for the glittering lights of Las Vegas we have other options available to us. So we don't know which of those options we'll exercise, but we hope that wherever we wind up, you'll be there with us." Before presenting the Mix grandchildren, he said, "Unfortunately, I could not persuade their mother, Thomasina, to come over here from Auckland, New Zealand. So let me introduce Victoria Matthews, granddaughter of our hero, Tom Mix, and her brother Dan."

Vickie read a poem about Mix that had been written by a neighbor, Lydia Marcus. Dan limited his remarks to "Thank you for keeping alive the memory of our grandfather."



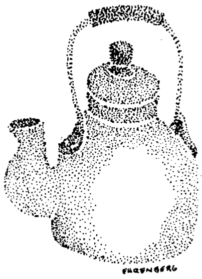
heidi

It was lucky-drawing time. In addition to the miniature Cord 812 Phaeton Coupe, Dr. Seiverling was giving away a 1933 Duesenberg Twenty Grand and a 1935 Auburn 851 Speedster. He acknowledged the presence of Neil Haworth, who had owned the full-scale Cord 812 before it entered the collection of the Imperial Palace, and recalled that three years earlier he himself had "had the honor of seeing and sitting in the car." This reminded me of something I had heard Colonel Mueller say the day before as I passed by his table: "I wish right now— I could use ten dollars for every time I drove that goddam car there. But most of the time I used the Cadillac or the Packard." The miniature Cord was won by Jim and Loretta Murray, who had stopped in Las Vegas on their way from Maryland to California, where they planned to pay homage to Tom and Tony's footprints, in Los Angeles, and to the gravesite, in Glendale. Jim was a retired customs officer and had been the recipient, in 1937, of a firm handshake from Mix and a signed photograph of him astride Tony. "That was the biggest thrill in my life," he told me, in a manner that left no room for doubt. Peter Hogue, the Ken Maynard scholar, won the one-of-a-kind wall clock.

After a final display of precision sharpshooting from Serge, "Den Glade Tom" and "Hest Contra Bil," the two films that Janus Barfoed had brought with him, were screened. I had no trouble recognizing Mix—more than ever, he resembled Serge—but I couldn't easily track the plots. I would have had less trouble, I suspect, if I hadn't bogged down trying to transcribe the dialogue in the intertitles: "*Og den gang lykkes det ham*" and "*En gæstfri engel*" and "*Jeg har manden!*"

Dr. Seiverling, I learned after the matinée, had made a glorious appearance in "The Legends in Concert" spotlight when I wasn't looking. The previous evening, he and his wife had accepted a pair of complimentary tickets to the midnight show, and the Marilyn Monroe impersonator had picked him out of the audience and had some fun with him. Photographic proof of this memorable event was available, and he was more than happy to share it with me: a color eight-by-ten that showed him seated in a chair with Marilyn on his lap. One of his trouser legs was rolled up, his hair was mussed, lipstick was smeared all over his face, and he was minus his eyeglasses, which had disappeared down the front of her dress. The photograph was inscribed "Darling Dick, My Heart Belongs to Daddy, Marilyn."

"She pulled my pants leg up, ripped open my shirt," he said. "You know, that's pretty hard to take. I had so much lipstick on my face I walked in here afterward and Janus thought I was bleeding to death."



Bud, who had already seen the photograph a few times but didn't mind another look, said, "I just noticed something about this picture, Dick—where your thumbs are."

"One of her pressure points," Dr. Seiverling said. "But I didn't squeeze. My glasses were in there. When I got them back, they were all steamed up."

"What did Gladys say?"

"I woke her up in the middle of the night. I told her, 'Honey, I just had a dream. And it wasn't about you.' "

Across the room I saw Colonel Mueller packing up. He had on the same all-black outfit—trousers, shirt with rose-and-white brocade stitching, boots, leather vest, neckerchief (with United States Marshal-badge neckerchief holder)—and the same tinted shades he had worn throughout the festival.

"Are you all done, Colonel?" I asked him.

"Done?" he growled. "I got here at three o'clock Wednesday and I was done at four. I have never spent four more boring days in my life. You know how women go through a change of life? Well, I experienced a change of life just sitting here. Boy, I'm tired. This just wore me out, doing nothing. Doing this solitary nothing."

I felt that the prudent thing to do at that point was to wander across the room for a chat with Bud, who I was certain had had a more diverting experience. I asked whether he and Dr. Seiverling had yet come to terms on "Flaming Guns."

"I sold it ten minutes ago," he said. "To that fellow over there."

The buyer, for the sixty-dollar asking price, was Gary Brown, the deputy city manager of Visalia, California, and a former police chief of San Clemente. I accompanied Bud while he broke the news to Dr. Seiverling.

"I hate to tell you this, Dick," he said. " 'Flaming Guns' is gone."

"Who bought it?"

"Gary Brown."

Dr. Seiverling reacted graciously and philosophically. "I told you if you could sell it, sell it," he said. "And it's in good hands, because he's a younger collector. And that's the kind of guy who's got to keep this going when we're gone. His father was an old Tom Mix fan. If anybody should have got that book, Bud, Gary's the one."

Then, barely missing a beat, Dr. Seiverling announced that he wanted all the members of the festival staff to pose for a group picture with the Cord. He and Bud and Bill Uhler, his projectionist, and their wives, the Reinharts, and Brenda Darrigrand all lined up next to the car. Serge, who was wearing an orange shirt with black piping and black buttons on the bib, navy slacks with orange piping, a black scarf, and a beige sombrero, sat behind the wheel. When Dr. Seiverling said, "Serge is going to drive us to Florence, Arizona!" everyone else said, in chorus, "Oh, no!"

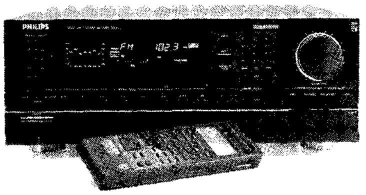
Several hours of packing lay ahead for Dr. Seiverling, whose plane wasn't scheduled to leave until the next afternoon. He was tired, of course, and as soon as he got home he had to start thinking about an African photography safari that he and Gladys would be embarking on within a week, but he seemed satisfied. "The high point for me was seeing 'Welcome National Tom Mix Festival' on the marquee of the Imperial Palace," he said. "And, as far as actual fans are concerned, we had our best turnout ever. You understand, I'm not talking about commuters and parade lovers. I'm talking about real Tom Mix fans."

He held up a beige promotional poster, one of several that had been on display in the hotel—a smiling head shot of Tom Mix, with an appliquéd border of lariat rope. "Isn't this something?" he said.

I agreed that it was really something.

"I'm going to make sure every member of my staff gets one of these," he said. "Someday this is going to be a real collectible."

—Mark Singer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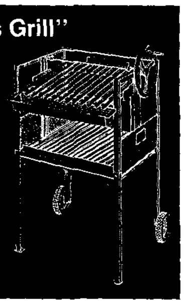
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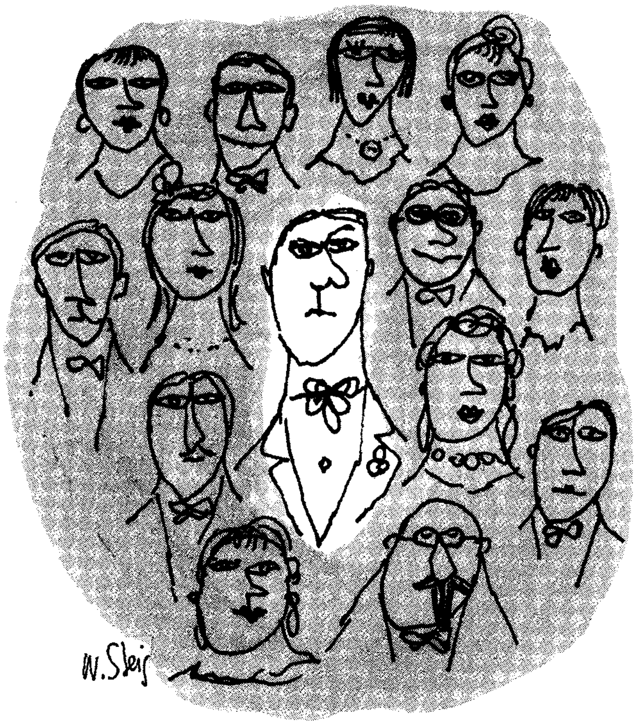
BOOKS

At the Hairy Edge of the Possible

OURS is an age of personalities and interviews, of interest in people rather than in abstractions like life and time and liberty and fortune. Personalities contrived by the procedures of media publicity pique the human curiosity once satisfied by the daily intercourse of the village and the city neighborhood. The science of cosmology, an ethereal and problematical blend of astronomy and particle physics, would seem to be abstract and aloof beyond reach of popularization, but its more spectacular findings make newspaper headlines, and in "Origins: The Lives and Worlds of Modern Cosmologists" (Harvard; $29.95) Alan Lightman and Roberta Brawer, scientists themselves, present a celebrity-interview approach to twenty-seven practicing cosmologists. With one exception, the twenty-four men and three women (the oldest born in 1915 and the youngest in 1949) were asked a predetermined set of questions, beginning with their individual lives and work, proceeding to their opinions of certain recent developments in cosmology, and ending with two queries that, in the words of the preface, "ask the interviewees to put aside their natural scientific caution and talk philosophically about their personal feelings toward their subject"—their subject, the universe. Since these two last questions are pseudo-religious clunkers, which most of the interviewees stumble over and some decline to answer, we feel some anxiety for the cosmologists as they are led through relatively manageable and concrete topics toward the sputtering endgame.

The two questions are, in brief, "How would you redesign the universe if you could?" and "Do you agree with Steven Weinberg when he says, 'The more the universe seems comprehensible, the more it also seems pointless'?" Almost none of the cosmologists have any better ideas on creating the universe. Several would like to remove the physical limit that the speed of light sets on our ability to travel in space, and one, Maarten Schmidt, having protested, "This is really the worst question I've ever heard," would make the universe bigger—"I find the universe too confined. I find it amazing that it is so small." John Huchra proposes a steady-state universe with lots of planets and life and no speed-of-light limit, and adds, "Right now, I'd design it with a ski chalet in New Hampshire." The "pointless" question seems to embarrass even Weinberg, who is one of the interviewees, and it does not help that the question is sometimes posed as whether or not the universe has a "purpose." (A purpose is not the same thing as a point: the point of "King Lear" is that an old man should not rashly give away his property and his prerogatives, whereas its purpose is to entertain, astound, frighten, and purify the audience.) The interviewers are fishing for a religious response, and most of the cosmologists, not being religious, refuse to bite. "Why should it have a point?" Margaret Geller asks back, in a typical response. "What point? It's just a physical system, what point is there?" "I don't think there is an enormous point to it all," Vera Rubin more gently allows, adding, "But, for some of us, attempting to understand this universe is important and a major part of our lives." Weinberg's sentence goads James Peebles to sniff, "That's such an anthropomorphic remark, and not in the sense of the anthropomorphism of Bob Dicke, but I think in a much more naïve sense." To Gérard de Vaucouleurs "the remark sounds almost nostalgic."

There are two professed Christians among the cosmologists here—Charles Misner, a Roman Catholic, and Don Page, the son of missionaries and a "conservative" Protestant. Misner, confronted with the Weinberg pronouncement, says, "I come down on just the opposite side of that. . . . The majesty of the universe is meaningful, and we do owe honor and awe to its Creator." Misner has written on the interplay of theology and cosmology, and makes an adroit analogy between Newtonian mechanics—good enough for everyday life—and Biblical mythology. He professes surprise that not everybody is as heartened as he is by Freeman Dyson's vision of a remote universal future in which life will persist, though tremendously slowed down ("The heartbeat is once per 10 billion years"). Page, though he tries "to believe in the meaning" he thinks the Bible "is intended to have," finds himself "a bit skeptical about applying the strong anthropic principle, that the universe *had* to have life in it, or that life was one of the necessary purposes for God to create the universe." He also employs analogy: "In some sense, the physical laws seem to be analogous to the grammar and the language that God chose to use." Edwin Turner, who besides being, according to his brief biography, interested in "hard rock music, baseball, Tai Chi, and Japanese poetry" is "a student of Eastern thought," says that he understands the point of the universe to be "probably close to the kind of Buddhist concept of something that just is. Does the water *mean* to catch the



The Self at a Gathering

reflection of the moon? It just *is*. I think trying to impose reasons on it, or points, is too anthropomorphic and just a dream." Among the older cosmologists, Allan Sandage resists pointlessness, on grounds that, he admits, involve "belief": "Nihilism finally ends up in insanity, at least in Nietzsche's case in Basel. To avoid that, I'm quite willing to believe there is a purpose. But it *is* a belief. . . . I am not willing to be a Nietzsche nihilist, because I think that is much more pointless." And Fred Hoyle, a godfather of modern cosmology and no enemy of far-out ideas (his book "The Intelligent Universe" asks us to believe that terrestrial life descends from myriads of microorganisms floating between the stars), comes up with an image, borrowed from the late Richard Feynman, of "a child who watches two grandmasters. First, the child has to figure out how the pieces move. But it's a long step from there to understanding the game, and a still vaster step to being able to play a better game." It is hard to discuss order without slipping into teleology. The shadowy grandmasters playing the game of the universe are uncomfortable apparitions for most cosmologists. One of the appeals of the steady-state theory of the universe was its diffusion of the Creation issue: instead of the big bang's giant singularity it offered a minute if equally inexplicable dribble of new hydrogen atoms.

The interviewers' final two questions, awkward as they are for the bulk of the subjects, open onto the ancient religious concerns that make cosmology more fascinating to the layman than, say, bacterial biochemistry or algebraic topology. The heavens are traditionally the abode of God, and evidence of His existence must lie, if anywhere, in Creation. As Misner says, "The big bang is on everyone's lips. If you have a talk or a public lecture on the big bang universe, you will get crowds." Even among the predominantly atheistic physicists and astronomers whose cosmological views are here solicited, there is a powerful yen for the absolute, in the form of an elegantly simple theory. Many confess to believing that omega, the ratio of observed average mass density in the universe to the critical mass density needed to halt, eventually, the universe's outward expansion, is exactly one, even though the best observational data yield an omega of merely 0.1. This is including the so-called "dark matter," whose presence is deduced from gravitational motions within galaxies; an omega based upon the visible mass—the shining stars and galaxies—would be 0.01. Dark matter, which certainly exists (you're standing on some of it), should be distinguished from "missing mass," the hypothetical nine-tenths of the universe needed to make omega equal one. Peebles, asked to design his universe, says, "I would make omega close to unity, zero space curvature, and zero cosmological constant." "The beauty of omega equals 1 has been growing on me," Sandage claims, and for James Gunn, "If omega is not 1.0000, then something is screwed up." Misner says, "There is something very seriously wrong with our cosmology, and something is dramatically overlooked if that number is not 1 right now," and Page avows, "I do believe in inflation enough to have some prejudice toward thinking that omega is likely to be very close to 1."

"Inflation" refers to another pet notion of current cosmology—the theory that within its first second the mysteriously born big-bang universe, initially compressed to infinite smallness, achieved, under the pressure of a momentarily reversed gravitational force, and on top of its normal, sustained expansion, an exponential inflation from one-trillionth the size of a proton to the dimensions of a softball, or even, by some accounts, of a basketball. In about 1/100,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 of a second, as Marcia Bartusiak's helpful "Thursday's Universe" expresses it, the infant cosmos doubled and redoubled in size a hundred times, a rate—to reach into the sports closet once more—that would expand a tennis ball to the size of the present observable universe. This "inflationary" hypothesis, developed from the formulas of particle physics and general relativity in a single, four-page burst of calculation (from 11 P.M., December 6, 1979, to one o'clock the next morning) by Alan Guth, then a young postdoctoral physicist at Stanford, has subsequently met considerable objection and undergone much modifica-

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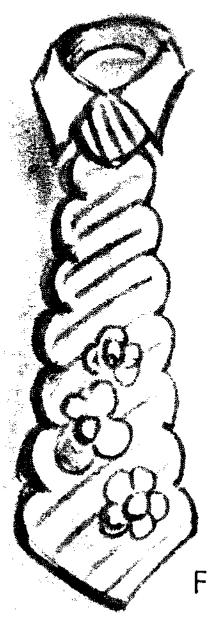

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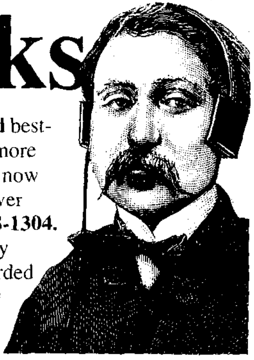

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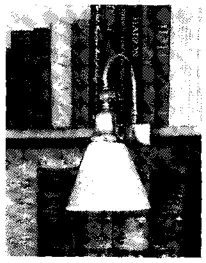

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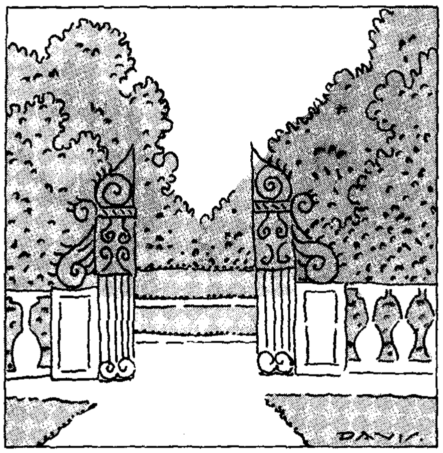
tion, and, according to Stephen Hawking, "is now dead as a scientific theory." But it still intrigues cosmologists, because in one blow it eliminated a number of spooky puzzles about the big bang, such as: Why is the universe so flat? Why is it so smooth? Where did the monopoles go?

Flatness: an incredibly fine balance—less than a trillionth of one per cent—between the force of the "bang" and the density of the "banged" primal matter must be posited for omega to be as close to unity as it is. Smoothness: the apparent homogeneity of the observed universe, and, especially, the almost perfect isotropy of the cosmic background microwave radiation—discovered in 1965 and believed to have originated when the universe was a mere million years old—seems to demand that areas of the expanding universe communicated with each other across impossible distances, from beyond the horizon set by the speed of light. And monopoles—heavy particles with a single magnetic pole—are predicted in abundance by the physics of the grand unified theories, and yet can't be found. Inflation explains these and other anomalies, and also has the metaphysical charm of greatly reducing the scale of Creation: Guth has calculated that a mere twenty pounds of matter is needed to spark cosmic inflation and generate the 10^{87} particles in the universe. He has famously said, "Our universe is the ultimate free lunch." Cosmologists are as fond of a free lunch as the next, and a work like "The Creation," by the British chemist P. W. Atkins, delves with considerable glee into the possible mechanics of something accidentally emerging from nothing. Further, if gravitational energy exactly equals the force of the expansion, we have a universe whose net energy is zero, which occasions a nihilist satisfaction in some scientific minds.

Meanwhile, we are stuck with the universe that does unaccountably exist, at the minimum ten billion years old and ten billion light-years in radius. In the many discussions of the inflationary hypothesis, not one cosmologist seemed troubled by what seems to me its most implausible aspect: its reduction of our observed universe to a mere fleck within a supposed inflated universe that exists far beyond the reach of our telescopes. Far, *far*—the limits of the real universe, if Guth is right, are a hundred billion *billion* times as distant. My lay reaction to such an idea is outrage that the already unthinkable vastness of what exists should be so trivialized. I am reminded of Jain cosmology, which measures time in long periods called *palyas*, and speaks of a hundred million times a hundred million *palyas* as "an ocean of years," and goes on to speak of a hundred trillion oceans of years—crushing numbers conjured up in order to reduce the brain to selfless submission. A certain amount of vastness constitutes majesty; more than that is madness. In Steven Weinberg's cosmological "The First Three Minutes," a similarly gargantuan hypothesis of excess is casually put forward. The billion-to-one preponderance of photons over baryons (nuclear particles) in the universe, Weinberg tells us, derives from a time when the balance was about equal, and the baryons were almost equally divided between particles and antiparticles. But there was one baryon in every billion that didn't have a matching antibaryon, and the great mutual annihilation left this "tiny excess of particles over antiparticles as a residue which would eventually turn into the world we know." The free lunch was catered for a billion more guests than stayed past the soup. Such numbing numerical possibilities are the daily fare of cosmologists, cunningly made more palatable by the discreetness of exponential notation; e.g., 10^{87} particles in the universe, give or take a few. Only Roger Penrose, by discipline a mathematician, seems to share my repugnance: when told of the inflationary theory, he thought, "Gosh, that is a horrible idea," and of once fashionable cosmic "strings" he admits, "Although studying these things is fun, I don't think I believe in them."

These interviews show a tug between the interviewers' tropism toward the big issues and the interviewees' insistence on empirical particulars. No scientist comes straight to cosmology but arrives, rather, by way of particle physics, astrophysics, or even pure mathematics, like Penrose. Marc Davis and John Huchra are unusual among the younger cosmologists in having logged large amounts of telescope time, and in allowing that the actual facts that theory manipulates are rather scanty. Of cosmology, Davis says simply, "The subject is data-starved." He was a student of Peebles, who told him, "What the world needs is good data. It doesn't need another crummy theory." Huchra, who by remeasuring thousands of galactic redshifts came up with a faster rate of universal expansion than he had expected, and thus has significantly reduced the estimated age of the universe, says of the vexed issue of large-scale structure, "The data is in bad shape."



A good deal of journalistic attention has been given in recent years to the discovery of apparent structures—strings and "walls" of galaxies, immense voids, independent galactic motions toward a "Great Attractor"—and one of the questions posed by Lightman and Brawer concerns the announcement by Geller, Huchra, and Valerie de Lapparent of huge bubbles of vacuity many tens of millions of light-years in diameter. The consensus among the cosmologists of "Origins" seems to be that we need not yet abandon the lone-singularity big-bang theory of the creation of a roughly uniform universe. After all, irregularity is no surprise: it visibly exists in the stars and galaxies. On the other hand, the striking sameness of the 3°K. cosmic background radiation in every direction can't be easily explained away. The universe is like an enormous sponge, and though the sponge has bigger holes in it than we thought, the time to throw it in has not arrived. James Gunn, another hands-on telescope astronomer, says, "The problem with the observations is, as always, that cosmological observations are always right at the hairy edge of the possible. Observers tend to overinterpret their observations. Theorists tend to overinterpret the observations even more." And he makes the point that "as universities become poorer and poorer and observational astronomy gets centered at fewer and fewer higher- and higher-powered places, there's just not much way to educate people to do instrumental stuff." These interviews predate the discovery that the Hubble telescope in space is somewhat myopic, and the hopeful references to it are sad.

The universe contains puzzles closer to hand than its creation. There is still no satisfactory theory of how our planet came to have such a relatively large satellite as the moon, or why the sun rotates so much slower than it theoretically should. Edwin Turner, discussing the flatness problem, says, "It seems curious but maybe it's just the way things are—like the sun and the moon being the same angular size in the sky, which they are incredibly precisely." This remarkable coincidence in apparent size of the two very different bodies that dominate our earthly sky might be taken as a kind of divine signature left mockingly for men to contemplate. Certainly the host of exquisitely tuned cosmic givens—from omega to the gravitational constant, from the fine-structure constant that governs atomic interactions to the strong-interactions constant that holds atomic nuclei together—have conspired to frame a universe stable and long-lasting enough to permit the evolution of intelligent life. This issue has given cosmology in recent years an unexpected anthropocentric turn. Of course, the resemblance, on a vastly greater scale than the Bible envisions, of the big bang to the Judaeo-Christian Creation myth had already been noticed by the Pope and many lesser prelates. Perhaps coincidentally, the big-bang theory was first developed, in 1927, from Edwin Hubble's redshift observations, by Georges Lemaître, a Belgian priest, and was enthusiastically promoted by Sir Arthur Eddington, a Quaker theist. What needed modern physics to make it clear was the remarkable tightwire that the universe walks to render our small section of it hospitable to life. The planet is exceptional in its conditions, but its being one of a number removes it from the shadow of purposeful intention. We are here because we are here; Venus or Jupiter clearly wouldn't do. But a one-shot universe? Well, perhaps there are many, one line of speculation goes, positing a branching of equally real universes at every fork of quantum indeterminacy—an exercise in multiplication to make even the Jains balk. Another line of argument, the anthropic principle,

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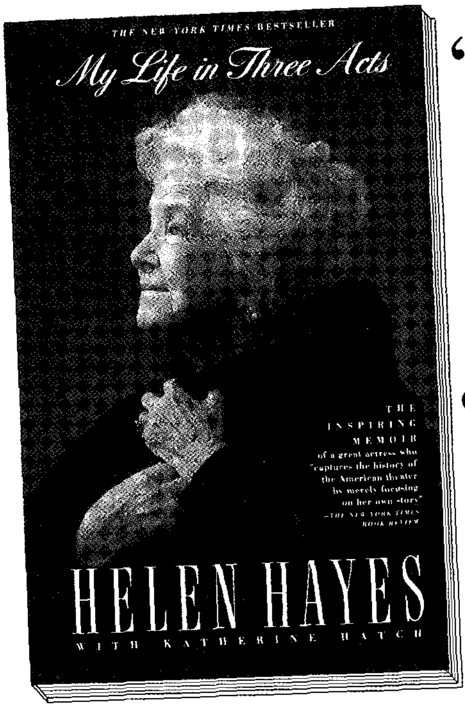
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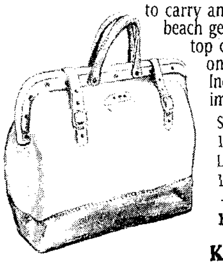

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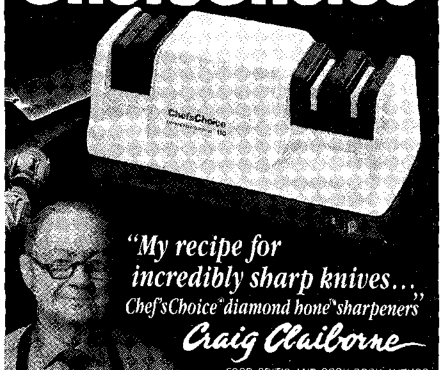

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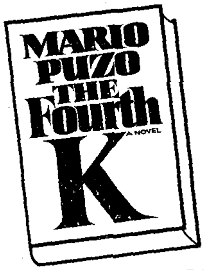

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attempts to make intellectual capital of the long-odds oddity by saying that certain properties of the universe depend upon the fact that without those properties we would not be here to observe them.

Follow that? "Origins" provides, in the interviewers' introduction and their glossary, thoroughly tepid definitions of the anthropic principle: "The weak form states that life can arise and exist only during a certain epoch of our universe. The strong form states that only for a special kind of universe could life arise at all, at any epoch." If that were all the anthropic principle said, it would hardly be worth enunciating. The principle's boldest proponent, John Archibald Wheeler, suggests that the universe needs us in order to exist. "Has the universe," he asks, "required the future observer to empower past genesis?" Invoking the indeterminacy principle, he points out that quantum mechanics is bound up with human observation. "The central feature of quantum mechanics tells us today with impressive force: In some strange sense, this is a participatory universe." The participation grows stranger, extended to the macrocosm: "No reason has ever offered itself," he contends, "why certain of the constants and initial conditions have the values they do, except that otherwise anything like observership as we know it would be impossible." Wheeler would include under observership a disembodied Geiger counter, but his thrust seems aimed at mankind: "Ask as we do now, if no universe at all could come into being unless it were guaranteed to produce life, consciousness, and observership somewhere and for some little length of time in its history-to-be?" At some point in the participatory version of the anthropic principle, common sense leaves us; but then it leaves us in particle physics as well, with waves that are also particles and whose position and velocity cannot be simultaneously determined. What is clear from every interview in "Origins" is our undeniable fascination with the universe in its broadest construction and deepest rationale. With Gallic clarity, Gérard de Vaucouleurs states, "If the universe was created to produce mankind—and especially rational man and his modern civilization and everything that man has developed in the past ten thousand years (a split second on the time scale of the cosmos)—it's an incredibly inefficient mechanism." Nevertheless, we take joy in trying to understand this inefficient mechanism, as it churns away behind the plate glass of its inviolable distances, and it is a warming, if weird, thought that, as Wheeler says, "the observer is as essential to the creation of the universe as the universe is to the creation of the observer."

This book of interviewed observers lets us know, in its own inefficient manner, what the current cosmological trends and issues are. There is more talk about omega and isotropy and the missing dark matter than you might expect, and less of cosmic strings and plural universes. Marc Davis shares the news that, as far as astronomy goes, "the particle physics connection is dropping by the wayside. The particle theorists have their problems with grand unification and supersymmetry and superstrings. The astrophysicists are worried about the details of galaxy formation and whether the cold dark matter model works or not. They're not communicating as much as they were a few years ago." "Origins" has a glossary and a bibliography but no index. Throughout, its prose is punctuated as if by people who are used to working with numbers. Most reprehensibly, its introduction seems to say that the earth and the universe are practically the same age: "In astronomy, where the ages of things span a huge range, 4 billion years"—the age of the earth as determined by radioactive dating of uranium—"is considered very close to 10 billion years." Well, for one thing, the age of the universe is still customarily given as fifteen billion years, and, for another, the earth consists of heavy elements that could only be created not in the big bang but in the dying convulsions of large stars and then dispersed in supernova explosions, as dust that gravity slowly reconcentrated. The sun is at least a second-generation star, and so its planets are *significantly* younger than the universe. Even in cosmology, billions should count for something.

—John Updike

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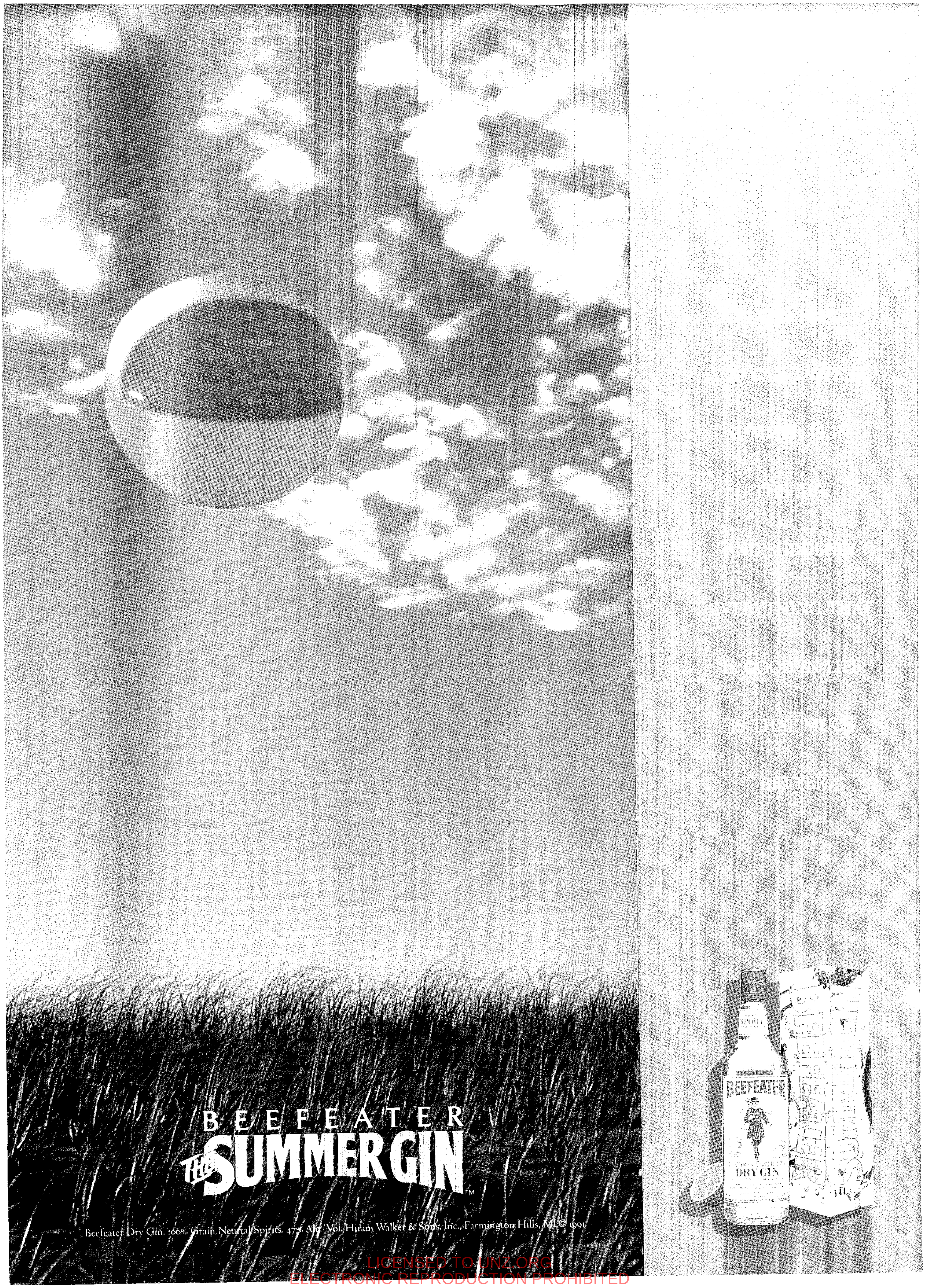
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